Evaluation Reports
Formative Evaluation of Learning Initiatives

Evaluation and Data Development
Strategic Policy
Human Resources Development Canada

March 1999

SP-AH096-03-99E
(également disponible en français)

Acknowledgements

Learning Initiatives is a federal strategic initiative that is funded and managed by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and part of the federal government's youth and learning strategy.

This report constitutes a formative evaluation of Learning Initiatives.

This evaluation was conducted by Coopers & Lybrand Consulting under the direction of HRDC. The process was valuable for its ability to bring individuals and organizations together to share and examine information about those activities and outputs that are aimed at improving the learning system in Canada.

The Coopers & Lybrand evaluation team would like to thank those who contributed to the study, especially officials in the federal government and the expert practitioners who gave their time and experience to assist the evaluation team.

We would also like to thank the many recipients of program funding who generously shared information about the impact of Learning Initiatives on their working lives and provided the evaluation team with important information about the program and its benefits. The outputs speak to the commitment of the individuals involved and of their faith that a more effective learning system in Canada is the basis for our future prosperity and growth.

106-02332/

Table of Contents

Executive Summary i

Management Response ix

1. Introduction 1
- 1.1 Study Purpose and Objectives 1
- 1.2 Report Outline 2

2. Program and Environmental Description 5
- 2.1 Learning Initiatives in the Context of Current Trends 5
  - 2.1.1 Current Trends Affecting Learning Systems 5
  - 2.1.2 Canadian Learning System Work in Progress 7
  - 2.1.3 Summary 10
- 2.2 Background to Learning Initiatives 10
- 2.3 Organizational Structure and Design of Learning Initiatives 12

3. Study Methodology 13
- 3.1 Formative Evaluation 13
- 3.2 Methodology Elements 13
  - 3.2.1 Evaluation Framework 14
  - 3.2.2 Literature Review 18
  - 3.2.3 Survey Set Review 18
  - 3.2.4 File Review 19
  - 3.2.5 Interviews 20
  - 3.2.6 Focus Groups 21
  - 3.2.7 Expert Panel 21
  - 3.2.8 Summary 22

4. Project Profiles 23
- 4.1 The Development of National Learning Goals 23
  - 4.1.1 Implementation 23
  - 4.1.2 Outputs 24
- 4.2 The Refinement and Expansion of Measurement Tools 24
  - 4.2.1 Implementation 24
  - 4.2.2 Outputs 25
    - 4.2.2.1 Outputs of Non-Survey Projects 28
- 4.3 The Dissemination of Information Applicable to Labour Market and Learning Innovations in Canada 28
  - 4.3.1 Implementation 28
  - 4.3.2 Outputs 29

5. Evaluation Findings 31
5.1 Overall Learning Initiatives Findings 31
5.1.1 Budget Analysis 33
5.1.2 Summary 37
5.2 Establishment of National Learning Goals 37
5.2.1 Partnerships 38
5.2.2 Role of Government 38
5.2.3 Communication 39
5.2.4 Project Administration and Accountability 40
5.2.5 Summary 41
5.3 The Refinement and Expansion of National Measurement Tools 41
5.3.1 Partnerships 43
5.3.2 Role of Government 44
5.3.3 Communication 45
5.3.4 Project Administration and Accountability 46
5.3.5 Summary 47
5.4 The Dissemination of Information Applicable to Labour Market and Learning Innovations in Canada 47
5.4.1 Partnerships 48
5.4.2 Role of Government 48
5.4.3 Communication 49
5.4.4 Project Administration and Accountability 50
5.4.5 Summary 50

6. Implications for Learning Initiatives 53
6.1 Program Design and Administration 53
6.2 Learning Initiatives Strategy and Project Linkage 53
6.3 Communication 54
6.4 Conclusions 54

Bibliography 57

Appendix A — Project Descriptions 67

List of Tables

Table 1 Distribution of Learning Initiatives Funding 1
Table 2 Evaluation Framework 14
Table 3 Data Collection Tools Used to Respond to Each Evaluation Question 15
Table 4 Comparison of Budgeted Expenditures vs. Disbursements 34
Table 5 Comparative Budget ($ Millions) 35

Figure

Figure 1 Organization of Learning Initiatives within HRDC 11

Executive Summary

The Interim Youth and Learning Strategy was undertaken by the federal government in collaboration with the provinces and industry. The overall strategy aimed to help young people prepare for the challenges of the labour market and the new global economy by improving existing school-to-work transition measures and introducing new approaches to the education and training system.

Learning Initiatives was established in 1994 as the information arm of the Interim Youth and Learning Strategy. A budget of $20 million over a period of five years was made available through Learning Initiatives to fund over 70 projects.

Learning Initiatives is intended to embody the concept of lifelong learning and promote the establishment of a broad-based learning culture. It was anticipated that projects funded through the Initiatives would contribute to the development of a more results-oriented, accessible, relevant and accountable learning system. Projects were intended to encourage broad participation by interest groups, decision makers and the public in the articulation of desirable learning goals and outcomes, and to sustain action around their attainment. Projects would contribute to research and analysis around the development of learning goals, indicators and monitoring instruments, and support the development of mechanisms to monitor progress on the achievement of learning goals. It was also intended that mechanisms would be put in place to distribute labour market information.

The following report presents the results of a formative evaluation of Learning Initiatives based on the first three years of program operation. The overall purpose of the evaluation study is to provide a mid-term assessment of program results to assist in program improvement. Six basic data collection tools were used in the formative evaluation: a literature review, an analysis of publication citations of surveys funded through Learning Initiatives, an administrative file review, key informant interviews, focus groups and an expert panel.

Learning Initiatives Program Profile

In order to achieve the objectives, Learning Initiatives has funded 72 diverse projects across three areas:

1. **National Learning Goals** — The 32 projects developed under this area have as their objectives the promotion and establishment of clear outcomes and performance indicators for the Canadian learning system.

2. **Measurement Tools** — The 27 projects under this area consisted largely of enhancing existing surveys, research projects, and conferences with a goal to clearly measure the outcomes of the learning system and identify gaps not covered by the existing data collection instruments.

3. **Information Dissemination** — The 13 projects under this area focused on the dissemination of labour market information and learning issues. Materials were produced to encourage youth to stay in school, to aid in the transition from school-to-work, to provide continued education and training, and to facilitate effective utilization of innovative learning technologies.

Five areas within Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) manage Learning Initiatives funding and projects. The three areas of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals, Measurement Tools, and Information Dissemination are functioning as three distinct "silos" within Learning Initiatives, with each area having very little knowledge of what is being undertaken by the other two. Learning Initiatives is not linked to other federal or provincial learning activities and there does not appear to be an overall strategic focus for project funding.

Summary of Key Findings

These findings are reported on the performance of Learning Initiatives against the original commitments contained in the original plan prepared prior to the launch of Learning Initiatives.

National Learning Goals

No Pan-Canadian Learning Goals have been developed, although discussions are taking place. Discussions have occurred between the Council of Ministers on Education in Canada (CMEC) and HRDC. Discussions appear to have focused on the development of performance indicators rather than the development of learning goals. Some progress has been made toward the development of the indicators. Learning Initiatives did provide funding to the Pan-Canadian Indicators on Education project to ensure that indicators related to lifelong learning were included in the project. With respect to the publication of learning reports to provide information to the public, a Report on Learning was published by CMEC but it is unclear whether any funding was received through Learning Initiatives.

No evidence was found during the formative evaluation that Learning Initiatives has developed working relationships or synergies with the Office of Learning Technologies. In addition, no evidence was found during the evaluation of funding provided to the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) through Learning Initiatives. It was originally proposed that CICIC would receive Learning Initiatives funding to collect and disseminate information on best practices in the area of learning.

Learning Initiatives has provided funding to 33 projects that have addressed specific issues related to the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals.

Measurement Tools

The original plan outlined commitments to enhance the following surveys: National Graduates Survey, the Survey for Labour Income Dynamics, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, the National Training Survey, and the School Leavers Survey. The submission also committed that additional measurement tools would be

developed to fill gaps in existing surveys once measurable goals and indicators are developed.

Five surveys have received funding through Learning Initiatives. Four of the surveys are existing surveys: The School Leavers Survey, the National Graduates Survey, Adult Education and Training Survey, and the International Adult Literacy Survey (1994); one new survey, the International Life Skills Survey, is under development. These surveys are developed through long-standing partnerships with Statistics Canada and a panel of expert advisors. The nature of the partnership relationship is that HRDC provides some, or in particular cases all, of the funding and content expertise in developing survey questions and Statistics Canada develops and administers the surveys and, in some cases, provides partial funding. In some instances Statistics Canada may analyze, publish and disseminate the surveys for HRDC.

The funding of the National Graduates Survey has resulted in revisions to include more questions on student satisfaction, educational history, skills development, and student financing. The funding of the Adult Education and Training Survey has contributed to a comprehensive review of the survey's content. The survey is being revised to enhance the policy relevance of the questions asked. The funding of the School Leavers Survey has resulted in the availability of ongoing, consistent and essential information on the school-to-work transitions. It has also resulted in the addition of questions to the survey focused on reading and writing skills. There was also evidence of a significant contribution to the common body of knowledge. The additional information gathered from the survey will permit better estimation of leaver rates, more refined analyses of labour market experience and the transition between high school, the labour force, and additional education and training.

The funding of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was used to analyze the most recent survey data. There was evidence that a contribution was made to the common body of knowledge. This contribution was made through the development of the International Life Skills Survey (ILSS). The ILSS is based on the IALS and is a comparative survey to identify and measure a range of skills that are linked to social and economic success in the adult population (age 16-65) of participating OECD countries. ILSS seeks to establish empirical measures of generic skill clusters that transcend industry, occupation, educational qualifications, and age-based experience.

Two additional surveys were identified in the original plan to receive Learning Initiatives funding: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) to include information on literacy of parents and the family learning environment, and the National Training Survey (NTS) to provide information on the private sector training effort. Our research indicated that Learning Initiatives funding had not been provided to these two surveys. The projected funding for these two surveys was reprofiled into the School Leavers Survey, the National Graduates Survey, and the ILSS. This was because funding was no longer needed for the NLSCY and NTS surveys. A third commitment was made in the original plan to fund the development of a module surveying employers and workers on employability skills to be included in the Survey for Labour Income Dynamics. Funding was not provided to this activity through Learning Initiatives.

Although originally proposed, the evaluation found no evidence of the existence of a best practices report.

Twenty-two additional projects have been funded under the measurement tools area of Learning Initiatives. These projects have focused primarily on areas related to components of performance measurement and performance indicators.

Information Dissemination

Thirteen projects have been funded under the Information Dissemination area. All of the projects focused on the development of specific materials on learning or on the labour market and their dissemination to users. Several of the projects funded were ongoing projects at HRDC which primarily entailed a shift in funding source.

The data sources accessed during the evaluation indicated that most of the material produced under this area has been disseminated but there was a lack of information about where the materials were sent and who had ultimately used them. Career information was disseminated electronically across Canada through the HRDC web site and CD-ROM products.

The formative evaluation did not identify tangible evidence of improved school-to-work transition, improved youth understanding of occupational options, or the acquisition of workplace skills, although it is too early to identify outcomes for most of these projects.

Findings Applicable to All Three Areas

Members of the general public and many recipients of project funding do not know that Learning Initiatives exists. If they have heard of Learning Initiatives, they are not aware of its goals or objectives. There is a lack of documentation or other evidence on the communication of the results and outputs for a number of Learning Initiatives projects.

A variety of partnership arrangements exist within Learning Initiatives projects. The most successful types of partnerships appear to be long-standing relationships. The role of HRDC with respect to these projects is primarily funder and advisor.

There is no one area in HRDC that is responsible for Learning Initiatives and no single point of accountability. Also, there is no separate financial code for Learning Initiatives and no standard application and progress reporting mechanisms. There is no standard file administration and management process and several project files could not be found during the evaluation.

The program design and implementation have a number of obstacles to overcome. Currently, the program design does not appear to facilitate the brokerage of information to learning system participants and stakeholders. One of the most consistent overall findings is that Learning Initiatives is not well known or understood by most stakeholder groups in the learning system. The requirement for partnerships and the time taken to negotiate meaningful partnerships was frequently cited as a challenge that delayed project

implementation. Additional challenges that have delayed implementation and completion have included time constraints imposed by HRDC and staff turnover at HRDC.

To date, Learning Initiatives is not significantly contributing to the development of learning systems. In fact, there has been very little response within the education system as a whole as a consequence of Learning Initiatives Some segments of the system have undertaken specific projects or have participated in projects through partnerships with project sponsors, but there has not been a system-wide response to the Initiatives.

Some of the outputs of specific projects funded through Learning Initiatives are consistent with the anticipated activities, however many are not — most notably in the National Goals area. No evidence was found during the evaluation that the outputs of the three areas of Learning Initiatives are improving the operational performance of the program.

Implications for Learning Initiatives

Learning Initiatives officials must determine if the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals is still an appropriate objective for Learning Initiatives.

The challenge for HRDC will be to preserve the positive effects of maintaining a "virtual Learning Initiatives program" while achieving a greater level of accountability and administration of project funding. Increasing awareness within HRDC of Learning Initiatives projects and ensuring that potential synergies are identified will assist in identifying project and funding gaps that need to be addressed through Learning Initiatives. There is an opportunity for HRDC to achieve considerable gains toward the achievement of the Learning Initiatives objectives by developing a strategic focus to project funding.

HRDC needs to determine how to ensure that project outputs and resulting information are appropriately communicated and used by stakeholders in the learning system. Client satisfaction assessments would enable HRDC to assess the extent to which projects actually addressed client needs within the learning system.

Recent Improvements

Since the completion of the evaluation field work, notable changes have taken place within the department that address some of the challenges identified in this report.

- **Project administration and accountability**

  At the time of the evaluation, the administration of the project files under measurement tools was not well documented. This may have been attributable, in part, to high staff turnover. Few files contained detailed budgeting or disbursement receipts and for some projects, files were not well organized. However, this situation is currently being addressed. In 1998/99, a key area in the department completed the implementation of a new in-house contracting reporting system. The new Contract Reporting System is a database application that has been set up to capture and report on information related to

contracts managed by HRDC. The improved reporting resulting from this system will ensure better financial decision-making and improved tracking capability.

- **The contribution of survey reports to policy development**
  With regard to the potential for the use of surveys in policy decisions, specifically in the area of education and the labour market, in 1998/99 HRDC agreed to partner with Statistics Canada and CMEC to provide data for a new OECD Program for International Student Assessment. This program will assess the performance of more than 30,000 15-year-olds in Canada and 30 countries are participating. The main survey will be conducted in 2000. The assessments will concentrate on reading, mathematics, and science. The results of the program, to be published in 2001, will allow policy makers in Canada to compare the performance of Canada's education systems with that of other countries. CMEC Chair, the Honourable Paul Ramsey recently stated that, "...results will provide useful information to both education and labour market ministries. It is our intention to find effective ways to help our youth make a smooth transition between the world of education and the world of work."

- **The contribution of School Achievement Indications Program (SAIP) to policy decisions for the education system**
  At a conference on February 27, 1998, Madame Pauline Marois, the Minister of Education for Quebec spoke about the provinces' support for School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP). She clearly indicated that all education ministers strongly expressed their support for the program. SAIP will enable the education ministers to set targets and verify how they can be reached in Canadian provinces and territories.

- **Enhancements to the School Leavers Survey**
  The School Leavers Survey is now scheduled to be replaced by the new Youth in Transition Survey (YITS). This larger longitudinal survey is designed to provide policy-relevant information on school-to-work transitions and will enable the empirical exploration of pathways that youths follow. The first phase of YITS collection, scheduled for 1999, will focus on a cohort of young adults aged 18-to-20. The second phase, planned for 2000, will collect data for a large sample of youth aged 15, selected from various schools. The specific objectives of the YITS are:

  — to examine key transition points in the lives of youth, such as their transition from high school to post-secondary education, through their transition from initial schooling to the labour market;

  — to better understand education and labour-market pathways;

  — to examine the incidence and effects of leaving secondary or post-secondary education before graduation;

  — to understand the impact of high-school effects on educational and occupational outcomes;

— to examine the contribution of work experience to skill development and transition to the labour market;

— to study the attitudes, behaviours and skills of youth entering the labour market;

— to examine the impact of post-secondary education focusing on access to education;

— to better understand the role of aspirations and expectations in further education and career choice.

In the February 1998 Budget Speech, the Honourable Paul Martin commended HRDC efforts in the learning area. HRDC had played a key role in the internal discussions leading to recent federal decisions in the learning area.

Management Response

Introduction

Four main areas of responsibility[1] for the Learning Initiatives Fund (LIF) within Strategic Policy (Applied Research Branch, Labour Market Policy) and the Human Resources Investment Branch (Learning and Literacy Directorate, and Occupational and Career Development) have reviewed the evaluation of the LIF completed in March 1999 and accept the evaluation's conclusions.

The LIF program sunsetted in March 1999. A new and improved program addressing the issues raised in the evaluation is now under consideration. The potential program will be situated within the department's Lifelong Learning agenda and subject to ministerial approval.

Specific Findings

1. The LIF did not contribute to the establishment of national learning goals and the evaluation questioned the appropriateness of this objective. While the evaluation references progress made in the development of performance indicators, it notes that the LIF did not contribute significantly to the development of learning systems. Program management notes that the LIF has succeeded in bringing federal/provincial learning priorities toward partnerships and contributed to plans toward the development of national learning goals through a national agenda on lifelong learning.

2. The LIF was not well known or understood by the general public or organizations involved in the learning system in Canada. The report recognized that a consultative process towards the development of Pan-Canadian learning goals is now underway with provincial governments through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and found that the federal government should provide more leadership in this area, continue the consultative process, maintain a national focus on learning and create a national learning system. It also found that the federal government should facilitate the further development of Pan-Canadian learning goals and standards and disseminate its results to all stakeholder groups and the public. Program management agrees that the design and orientation of the future "Learning Initiatives Program" will address these findings. It should be noted that the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP), a joint CMEC-HRDC project, recently announced national results on reading and writing for youths (13-16 years). This project, funded under the LIF, is helping support development of a national learning system and enhancing federal-provincial co-operation and is also generating considerable public attention. In addition, the SAIP is playing a key role in supporting the establishment of national standards in education.

---

1 Originally five areas were involved prior to restructuring.

3. The LIF should improve its co-ordinating function with strategic direction for selecting and funding projects and for disseminating results of individual projects. While some progress has been made towards dissemination of labour market and career information, there was no linkage with the Office of Learning Technologies, or with Industry Canada's SchoolNet program. There were no project linkages between or among projects and there was no activity to leverage knowledge derived from one project to enhance or develop other projects. Program management agrees that a single point of co-ordination with a shared strategic focus to funding should be emphasized in the design of a new funding program. The Learning and Literacy Directorate has been reorganized and one central point has now been designated to take the lead on the potential new Learning Initiatives Program.

4. In the area of National Measurement Tools, the evaluation reported that there was evidence of a significant contribution made to the common body of knowledge as a result of funding to the School Leavers Survey, the National Graduates Survey, the Adult Education and Training Survey and the International Adult Literacy Survey. The report noted that these surveys have been valuable and useful and will contribute to new knowledge in these areas. The potential new program will endeavour to continue this success.

5. An information management system should be created under the LIF to provide clear, consistent communications with its project delivery partners and stakeholders in the learning system and to disseminate project results. A potential future funding program will focus on dissemination of project results as part of the contractual agreements. Program management notes that the Learning Information Products unit (including CanLearn Interactive) in the Learning and Literacy Directorate has the potential to disseminate project results and best practices to a broad range of stakeholders and could serve to support this function.

6. In the area of program administration and accountability, the evaluation reported that the LIF lacked appropriate administrative procedures and reporting requirements in the maintenance of project files and project follow-up and functioned as a "virtual program" with shared responsibility across a number of areas within HRDC. The design of a potential program will address the level of accountability and emphasize appropriate administration and reporting procedures for project funding.

Conclusion

Program management recognizes that gains toward learning objectives can be made by taking the corrective action based on the findings of the evaluation within the overall management of a new funding program. Program management will emphasize in the design of a potential new program a central point of co-ordination with a shared strategic direction, an external peer review approach for future applications, improved linkages between projects and partners, and better promotion and marketing of the future initiative. We view the evaluation as an opportunity to take action on lessons learned and strengthen a potential Learning Initiatives Program in support of HRDC's interest in promoting a lifelong learning culture in Canada.

1. Introduction

1.1 Study Purpose and Objectives

Learning Initiatives forms part of the federal government's strategy for youth and learning.

The overarching objectives of Learning Initiatives are the development of a more accountable, accessible, effective and results-oriented learning system, the facilitation of the school-to-work transition, and the promotion of innovative learning techniques. These objectives are to be achieved through the following key components:

- promoting the establishment of clear performance indicators and outcomes for the learning system;
- updating and improving existing measurement tools to clearly measure the outcomes of the learning system; and
- facilitating the dissemination of information on key learning and labour market issues as well as encouraging the use of technology and innovation in learning to ensure that all partners have access to accurate, up-to-date, and relevant information.

The federal role in the implementation of Learning Initiatives is intended to be achieved primarily by supporting efforts by the provinces and territories to establish performance indicators for the learning system; providing adequate tools for the measurement of achievement of these goals; fostering the innovative use of technology in learning; and enabling the sharing of up-to-date labour market information. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) will enter into partnerships with national, regional, and community-based organizations to ensure broad participation in the articulation of measurable national goals.

A budget of $20 million over a period of five years was made available to Learning Initiatives, to be distributed as follows:

TABLE 1
Distribution of Learning Initiatives Funding

Initiatives	Total ($millions)
Pan-Canadian Learning Goals	4.95
Measurement Tools	11.50
Information Dissemination	3.50
Evaluation	0.05
Total	20

This funding was provided through a federal agreement, signed June 10, 1994, between HRDC and Treasury Board Secretariat. The agreement specifies the program structure, descriptions and criteria along with the legal obligations of both parties.

This report presents the results of a formative evaluation of Learning Initiatives based on the first three years of program operation. The evaluation was completed over the April-November period by Coopers & Lybrand Consulting.

The overall purpose of the evaluation study is to provide an assessment of the extent to which Learning Initiatives has been implemented to accomplish the program objectives and whether funded project outputs are consistent with these objectives. The study Terms of Reference require the evaluation to:

- examine the program design and implementation and establish whether or not it is consistent with the development of learning goals, measurement tools and information dissemination and if the initiatives are realistically developing learning systems;
- determine in what manner and to what extent the adequacy of operational activities and the outputs are effective in the operational performance of the program;
- explore the extent to which mechanisms have been developed to facilitate consultation and consensus building with respect to national learning goals;
- examine the extent to which transition-related resource materials (publications, videos, kits) are being produced and/or distributed to stakeholders throughout the learning system;
- explore the progress made in the first three years toward the improvement and enhancement of surveys to provide measurements of the results of the learning system; and
- identify the number of schools assisted with SchoolNet connections and the steps taken toward the dissemination of best practices in the teaching of math and science.

1.2 Report Outline

This report is organized into five chapters which outline the current learning environment and the implementation of Learning Initiatives, study methodology, evaluation findings, implications for the program, key issues arising from the formative evaluation and questions set out in the Terms of Reference.

This report addresses the primary study objectives in the following five chapters. In addition to this introductory chapter, the specific components of the study are as follows:

- **Chapter 2 — Program and Environmental Description** describes the program development, objectives, organization and activities of Learning Initiatives as well as

the current climate for learning in Canada as it relates to the objectives and activities of the program.

- **Chapter 3 — Study Methodology** provides an overview of the formative evaluation process and the role of a formative evaluation.

- **Chapter 4 — Project Profiles** provides information on the 72 projects that have received funding through Learning Initiatives with respect to their implementation and outputs.

- **Chapter 5 — Evaluation Findings** looks at the overall evaluation findings as applied to all project areas — national learning goals, the refinement and expansion of measurement tools, and the dissemination of information applicable to labour market and learning innovations in Canada.

- **Chapter 6 — Implications for Learning Initiatives** delivers a discussion of the implications of the findings for Learning Initiatives. A conclusion is also provided which summarizes the overall assessment of Learning Initiatives.

A literature review accompanies this report as a stand-alone document. The literature review functioned to shape the themes addressed and informed the methodology chosen for the evaluation.

2. *Program and Environmental Description*

This chapter provides a context for the development of Learning Initiatives by reviewing the current trends and activities in learning. International learning system activities are also reviewed to provide a complete background to the development of Learning Initiatives in Canada. The information on the context for Learning Initiatives contained in this chapter was drawn from the literature review conducted as part of the formative evaluation.

The second part of the chapter provides a description of the history and background of Learning Initiatives. Included is an overview of the structure, administration and implementation of Learning Initiatives. In addition, it provides information on the overall objectives of the Initiatives and the activities undertaken in support of the objectives.

2.1 Learning Initiatives in the Context of Current Trends

Global economic and social trends require continuous efforts on the part of the learning system to adapt and respond to changing knowledge and skill requirements. The political and fiscal realities require additional response from the learning system and efforts to balance these sometimes conflicting social, economic, political, and fiscal pressures create tremendous challenges for the learning system as a whole. These trends and the actions to respond to the trends provide the context for Learning Initiatives.

2.1.1 Current Trends Affecting Learning Systems

Global Trends

There are currently three global trends providing an impetus for reform of educational systems throughout industrialized countries:

- the transition to a knowledge-based economy requiring new and varied skill sets;
- the onset of globalization which demands portable skill sets; and
- the emerging recognition of the need for lifelong learning.

Economic and Social Trends

Economic and social trends affecting learning systems in all the industrial countries include:

- the large and continuing shift in employment from manufacturing industries to services;
- increasing globalization of the world economy and society;
- the wide diffusion of information and communication technologies;
- the increasing importance of knowledge and skills in production and services, leading to changing skill profiles needed for jobs;

- the changing distribution of employment opportunities, with many unskilled jobs disappearing;
- rapid turnover of products and services, with people changing jobs more often than previously, demanding more frequent renewal of knowledge and skills;
- the ageing of the population;
- emerging new patterns of leisure and work;
- changing family relationships; and
- the risk of social polarization emerging between those who participate fully in the acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and those who are left at the margins.

In Canada, as in the other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, there has been a great deal of concern about the adequacy of learning systems to address these social and economic conditions.

Landmark international reports such as the OECD's *Lifelong Learning For All*, endorsed by the OECD members' Education Ministers, and UNESCO's *Learning: The Treasure Within*, advocate a new framework for learning systems based on "lifelong learning for all." Proposed reforms have a number of aims, including the personal development of all citizens, social cohesion, and economic growth. This is to be achieved through reforms of the institutions providing educational foundations, overcoming problems of transition between school and work, providing lifelong adult education and training, achieving greater coherence within learning systems, and through new investments in learning.

Political and Fiscal Trends

In 1993, the federal government made the commitment to invest in youth and youth unemployment in Canada. In 1997, investment in Canadian youth remains a priority for the Government and there is some evidence of progress being made to address commitments. Learning Initiatives represents part of the Federal Government's response to these commitments.

Strategies to reform post-secondary education systems, however, must deal with the continuous federal and provincial government funding cutbacks. These cutbacks have been implemented over the period of a decade and have resulted in increased student-faculty ratios and reduced quality and availability of ancillary services such as libraries and laboratories. The funding cutbacks raise several interrelated issues involving accessibility, quality, and accountability. One attempt to deal with these funding issues, raised in the federal government's discussion paper, *Improving Social Security in Canada* (Canada 1994), proposed that federal resources be shifted to provide individual students with access to income contingent repayment loans (ICRLs). This shift in resources has been widely advocated since the mid-1980s. Student protest undermined this plan in 1994 and it disappeared in the February 1995 budget. Advocates argue strongly in favour of ICRLs as a way to deal with the fiscal problems.

Learning Stakeholders in Canada

There are several voices in the discussion of educational system improvement in Canada including business, government, citizen-based organizations and education professionals. The business community views the key educational goal as the promotion of Canada's economic competitiveness through the development of job-related skills. Citizen groups view the primary goals of the learning system as the improvement of quality, accountability and cost-effectiveness. The federal government views its responsibility as helping to create a more relevant, inclusive, and responsive learning environment as a prerequisite to the full utilization of Canada's human resources, the development of a competent and internationally competitive workforce, the evolution of a more efficient social security system, and a lifelong learning culture. Research indicates that education professionals also favour a broad view of the goals of education. They argue that the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required in society go well beyond those required in the workplace, and that, in any case, workplace skills themselves are much broader than usually acknowledged. Teachers tend to be opposed to external testing but in favour of national co-ordination of provincial curriculums.

Each of these voices represents a political force influencing the main decision makers in Canada's formal education systems — the provincial and territorial governments, particularly the provincial Ministries of Education.

2.1.2 Canadian Learning System Work in Progress

Developing National Learning Goals

International experience demonstrates that developing national goals is the necessary first step in the reform of national learning systems. The OECD report *Education at a Glance* describes international consensus on four learning goals: to achieve basic levels of literacy, to achieve excellence in education for all students, to achieve equal access to educational opportunity, and to achieve lifelong learning. Several countries have made progress toward the development of national learning goals. For example, in 1992 Britain established a set of national targets for education and training, after consultation with business, labour, and the education and training community. In 1990, the United States adopted a set of eight national goals to guide the reform of its education systems to the year 2000.

In Canada, the process of setting goals or targets has begun through the work of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), which has identified lifelong learning and accountability as the two overarching themes for education and training in Canada today.

Through its work, the CMEC has also initiated the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP) to monitor a broad range of indicators of performance in the learning

system as a whole, including both the formal education systems and job-related education and training. The indicators are designed to monitor progress in six key areas:

- accessibility (indicators focused on the accessibility of education);
- student flows (indicators focused on student flows in and out of the system);
- school-to-work transitions (indicators focused on the ease of transition and the fit between education and employment environments);
- achievement (indicators focused on student performance and educational attainment);
- citizenship (indicators focused on "citizenship", that is, the variables that play a role in developing "good citizens"); and
- satisfaction (indicators focused on satisfaction with the education system).

The first report has now been published (PCEIP 1996). The CMEC has also initiated the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) which measures the achievement of 13- and 16-year-olds in every province and territory in reading, writing, and mathematics. The first cycle had assessment of mathematics in 1993, reading and writing in 1994 and science in 1995. The second cycle began in 1996 with Mathematics 11 with planning for the administration of SAIP Reading and Writing 11 in the spring 1998, and the Science 11 Assessment in the spring of 1999.

Measurement Tools

In order to measure outcomes of the learning system as they relate to the achievement of learning goals, sound national measurement tools must be developed specifically for the Canadian learning system. Although there are no agreed-to Pan-Canadian Learning Goals, a number of national surveys on learning system outcomes are conducted in Canada.

Measurement tools such as the International Adult Literacy Survey and the Adult Education and Training Survey have provided the ability to compare adult literacy in Canada to literacy levels in other countries and to identify requirements for adult education and training.

The School Leavers Survey and the National Graduates Survey provide information on school retention and school-to-work transition issues. Longitudinal data on specifically identified variables are becoming available through the School Leavers Follow Up Survey that will provide further analytical capability. The National Graduates Survey also has longitudinal data on the graduation classes of 1982, 1986 and 1990 five years after graduation.

Improving Information Dissemination

Improved dissemination of labour market information will provide youth and other learners with the necessary information to make informed choices about career paths that are consistent with labour market requirements and economic trends. This information should facilitate school-to-work transitions by equipping students with the information they need to adequately prepare to make the transition successfully. Two areas for

information dissemination that have received some attention within the Canadian learning system are:

- school-to-work transitions; and
- computers for communication and information.

School-to-Work Transitions

In most industrial countries, including Canada, problems of school-to-work transitions remain a complex issue. There is particular concern about the difficulties experienced by youth in gaining access to the labour market.

The literature review conducted as part of the formative evaluation indicates that for North American systems, there appears to be a consensus that transition pathways should be flexible and interconnected to respond to changing labour market conditions as well as changing priorities of both employers and youth. Programs should promote collaboration among employers, educators, and public agencies. Young people should have opportunities for work-based learning. The division between academic and vocational streams should be reduced. At the same time, however, the degree of individual choice, one of the strengths of North American education systems, should be maintained and even enhanced. Education professionals believe that curricula should continue to emphasize the core skills that are the foundation for lifelong learning, and not over-emphasize practical, job-related skills that could easily become obsolete in a young person's lifetime.

The OECD suggests postponing a part of post-secondary education until a time when entrants are sure of their intended uses. Alternative learning models might include enterprise training, distance education, and non-formal learning for either job-related or personal development. In this approach, post-secondary institutions would have to provide a more modular approach to programs, complemented by access courses, refresher courses, and prior learning assessment.

Effective education, career and employment counselling are widely recognized as an important support to the transitions of individuals through school and work. In Canada as in other industrial countries, however, it is currently unevenly developed and unavailable to large numbers of people who need it.

Computers for Communication and Information

One innovation in improving access to information is through the introduction and increased use of computers in schools for the purposes of communication and information retrieval. This has been the subject of a lot of debate in Canada. The federal government is providing a substantial level of funding to support provision of computers to schools and to develop SchoolNet, an Internet web site (www.schoolnet.ca) and access route to the World Wide Web. The aim is to have all of Canada's 17,000 elementary and secondary schools connected through SchoolNet by 1998.

Advocates argue that introducing youth to information technology will allow them to develop skills that will be essential in future workplaces and will also provide benefits far beyond the workplace. Information and communication made possible through computers also contribute directly to the learning process in all subject areas. Internet access allows students to search library catalogues, get access to a vast range of information, and communicate with others around the world. Critics, on the other hand, argue that computers are the latest "educational bandwagon" and are over-emphasized. The funds being devoted to them could be spent much more usefully on textbooks, library acquisitions, and staff, since the critical element in education is not the information itself but rather learning how to use the information. Even those who advocate the use of computers in schools acknowledge that serious issues exist with respect to equality of access and the need for extensive professional development among teachers to enable them to work with the technology effectively with their students.

2.1.3 Summary

Current social and economic trends necessitate the improvement of Canada's learning system. Learning Initiatives is intended to respond to this need by working toward creating a system that is more accountable, accessible, effective and results oriented; better positioned to facilitate the school-to-work transition; and able to promote innovative learning techniques through:

- the establishment of clear performance indicators and outcomes;
- the improvement of measurement tools to measure outcomes; and
- the dissemination of information on key learning and labour market issues, as well as encouraging the use of technology and innovation in learning to ensure that partners have access to accurate, up-to-date and relevant information.

The challenge for the formative evaluation of Learning Initiatives is to determine the extent to which these objectives are being met and the extent to which they have contributed to positioning Canada to better respond to the challenges the learning system faces from the current social and economic trends and the fiscal and political realities.

2.2 Background to Learning Initiatives

Learning Initiatives was established in 1994 as the information arm of the Interim Youth and Learning Strategy. Undertaken by the federal government in collaboration with the provinces and industry, the overall strategy aims to help young people prepare for the challenges of the labour market and the new global economy by improving existing school-to-work transition measures and introducing new approaches to the education and training system.

By supporting efforts by the provinces and territories to establish national learning goals, fostering the innovative use of technology in learning and enabling the sharing of up-to-date labour market information, Learning Initiatives aimed to create a more effective and inclusive learning system, responsive to the needs of the labour market.

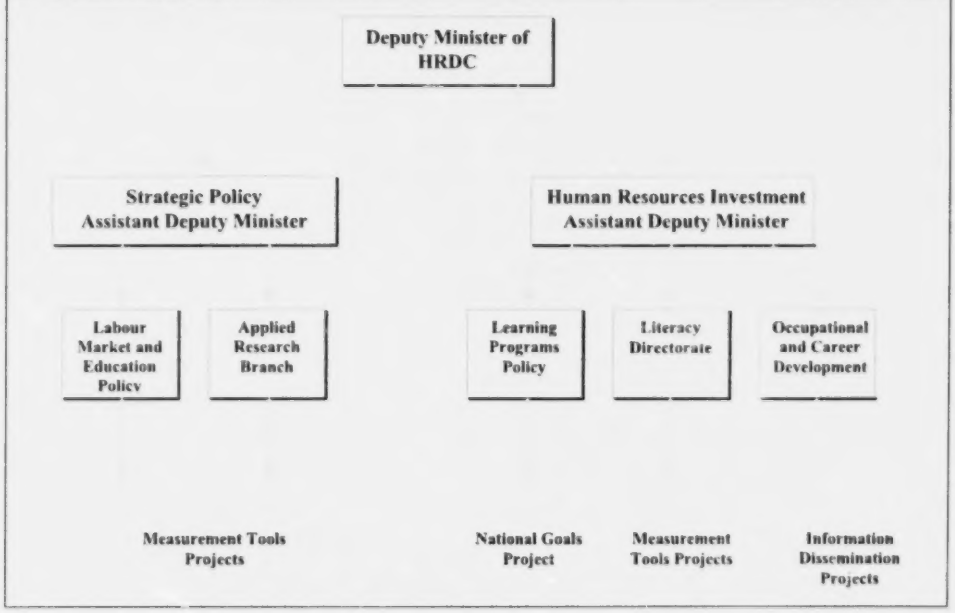
Learning Initiatives has funded projects and processes to achieve these objectives under three components: Learning Goals, Measurement Tools and Information Dissemination.

- **National Learning Goals** — Promoting the establishment of clear performance indicators and outcomes for the Canadian learning system.

- **Measurement Tools** — Updating and improving existing measurement tools to clearly measure the outcomes of the learning system and identifying gaps not covered by the data collection instruments.

- **Information Dissemination** — Facilitating the dissemination of labour market information and learning issues through the production of materials to encourage youth to stay in school, aid in the transition from school to work, continue further education and training, facilitate effective utilization of innovative learning technologies, and ensure all partners have access to accurate, up-to-date, and relevant information.

FIGURE 1
Organization of Learning Initiatives within HRDC



Learning Initiatives was intended to embody the concept of lifelong learning and promote the establishment of a broad-based learning culture. Projects funded through this program should contribute to the development of a more results-oriented, accessible, relevant and accountable learning system. They were intended to build consensus at all levels around measurable national learning goals, encourage broad participation by interest groups, decision makers and the public in the articulation of desirable learning goals and outcomes and work to sustain action around their attainment. They should also contribute to research

and analysis around the development of learning goals, indicators and monitoring instruments, and support the development of mechanisms to monitor progress on the achievement of learning goals.

2.3 Organizational Structure and Design of Learning Initiatives

As is demonstrated in Figure 1, two Assistant Deputy Ministers were responsible for implementing Learning Initiatives, (1) Strategic Policy and (2) Human Resources Investment. These two areas are further sub-divided into Labour Market and Education Policy, the Applied Research Branch, Learning Programs and Policies, the Literacy Directorate and Occupational and Career Development that comprise the five main branches involved in implementing the 72 projects that make up Learning Initiatives.

For the most part the national goals projects were implemented within the Learning Programs and Policies area. Measurement Tool projects were primarily undertaken through the Applied Research Branch with some projects implemented through the Labour Market and Education Policy area and the Literacy Directorate. Information dissemination projects were managed and implemented primarily by the Occupational and Career Development area.

Learning Initiatives provides funding through grants and through contributions. The terms and conditions for contributions include the class of recipients eligible for funding; the activities eligible for funding; the maximum funding support; and other administrative terms and conditions.

The five areas of HRDC providing Learning Initiatives funding for projects have functioned with considerable autonomy over the implementation of the Initiatives, with little communication, collaboration and planning across the different areas. Furthermore, it is not evident through this review that Learning Initiatives fostered any collaborative working relationships with any other areas of HRDC including the Office of Learning Technologies, a relationship which could have provided considerable working synergies for both programs.

3. Study Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology employed to complete the evaluation and a brief description of the formative evaluation and its role in program planning.

3.1 Formative Evaluation

A formative evaluation is intended to provide program officials with feedback on the implementation of the program so that appropriate improvements can be adopted prior to program completion.

The purpose of the formative evaluation of Learning Initiatives was to provide an assessment of program implementation, design, delivery, and outputs. This formative evaluation is intended to assess the extent to which Learning Initiatives has addressed:

- the program design and implementation and establish whether or not it is consistent with the development of learning goals, measurement tools and information dissemination and if the initiatives are realistically developing learning systems;
- in what manner and to what extent the adequacy of operational activities and the outputs are effective in the operational performance of the program;
- the extent to which mechanisms have been developed to facilitate consultation and consensus building with respect to national learning goals;
- the extent to which transition-related resource materials (publications, videos, kits) are being produced and/or distributed to stakeholders throughout the learning system;
- the progress made in the first three years toward the development and adaptation of surveys to provide measurements of the results of the learning system; and
- the number of schools assisted with SchoolNet connections and the steps taken toward the dissemination of best practices in the teaching of math and science.

3.2 Methodology Elements

The formative evaluation of Learning Initiatives employed six basic evaluation methodologies (i.e., data collection tools):

- a literature review of national and international publications to assess the status of international efforts to establish national learning initiatives as well as current opinion in Canada on the need for reform of the learning system to better meet the needs of the economy;
- an analysis of academic publications that cited surveys that had received funding through Learning Initiatives;

- a file review of the documents, manuals and agreements for projects that received funding under Learning Initiatives;

- interviews with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) officials involved in the delivery of Learning Initiatives, project delivery agents, end users of projects, and officials in related government projects;

- focus groups with employers, unions, employees, provincial government officials, learning organizations, students, parents, and teachers across the country; and

- an expert panel comprised of eight learning system experts representing the western, eastern, and central regions of Canada.

3.2.1 Evaluation Framework

Fifteen evaluation questions were developed by HRDC to be addressed through the formative evaluation. The Request for Proposals (RFP) provided an overall view of the data to be collected under each of the three main categories of the initiatives and grouped the evaluation questions into a smaller number of categories. Building on the information in the RFP, an evaluation framework was developed by the evaluation team following consultation with HRDC officials. The evaluation framework can be conceptualized as follows:

TABLE 2
Evaluation Framework

	National Goals	Measurements Tools	Information Dissemination
Role of government			
Partnerships			
Information Dissemination			
Accountability			
Contribution of Learning Initiatives			
Other Findings			

Each question was answered through multiple lines of inquiry to ensure that every effort was made to isolate the answers to each question. Table 3 demonstrates which data collection tools were used to respond to each evaluation question.

TABLE 3
Data Collection Tools Used to Respond to Each Evaluation Question

Questions	Literature Review	Interview	File Reviews	Focus Groups	Expert Panel
Design & Implementation					
1. Within the program design of Learning Initiatives, what are the roles/ responsibilities of the various governments? Have these roles changed since the inception of the program? How is the program design facilitating the brokerage of information to participants and stakeholders in the learning system?		✔	✔		
2. To what extent does Learning Initiatives promote and foster the development of partnerships among the various levels of government and the education community? What elements have assisted in facilitating these links? What response has occurred to date on the part of the education system as a consequence of Learning Initiatives?	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
3. To what extent is there continued goodwill and co-operation on the part of the learning partners including the education community, the business community, labour organizations, parents and students?		✔			
4. What are the linkages between Learning Initiatives and other similar undertakings on the part of the federal or provincial governments? For example, the Office of Learning Technologies. What is the nature of the value added by Learning Initiatives?		✔			✔

TABLE 3 (continued) Data Collection Tools Used to Respond to Each Evaluation Question					
Questions	**Literature Review**	**Interview**	**File Reviews**	**Focus Groups**	**Expert Panel**
Design & Implementation					
5. a) Have activities under the Initiatives: National Learning Goals, Measurement Tools and Information Dissemination been taking place according to plan or have major obstacles appeared during implementation?		✔	✔		✔
5. b) Are the outputs of the National Learning Goals, Measurement Tools and Information Dissemination consistent with activities and are they improving the operational performance of the program?		✔	✔		✔
Program Success					
6. To what extent have the full range of interested parties been given the opportunity to take part in consultations and consensus building toward the development of learning goals? What formal or informal structures have been developed for implementing and delivering the initiatives? Are these structures effective operationally?	✔	✔		✔	✔
7. To what extent and in what ways have client surveys been enhanced or developed to provide performance indicators appropriate to learning goals?		✔	✔		
8. Has demonstrable progress been made toward the identification of an agreed set of Pan-Canadian performance indicators and outcomes for the learning system? If so, do the goals, as they are evolving, address major areas of concern with the learning system?	✔	✔		✔	✔

TABLE 3 (continued)
Data Collection Tools Used to Respond to Each Evaluation Question

Questions	Literature Review	Interview	File Reviews	Focus Groups	Expert Panel
Program Success					
9. Has demonstrable progress been made toward the dissemination of best practices in the teaching of math and science? If so, to what extent have the users found the material helpful, appropriate and adequate to meet their needs?		✔			✔
10. Has substantial, documented progress been made toward the production and/or distribution of publications, videos, and kits for use by students and others in the learning system?	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
11. Have transition materials and software been made available to students? To what extent have these materials been effectively delivered? Have users found the materials helpful, appropriate and adequate to meet their needs? Might a less technological approach be a more appropriate operational delivery vehicle for reaching students and the community at large or for particular sub groups?	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
12. Is there improved empirical evidence upon which to base an assessment of the problems and issues with respect to the school-to-work transition, youth unemployment and school retention rates?	✔	✔		✔	✔
13. How effective is the present approach in reaching the general clientele intended and in reaching certain sub-groups with particular needs?	✔	✔		✔	✔

TABLE 3 (continued) Data Collection Tools Used to Respond to Each Evaluation Question					
Questions	**Literature Review**	**Interview**	**File Reviews**	**Focus Groups**	**Expert Panel**
Program Success					
14. Is there evidence of client satisfaction with respect to how assistance under Learning Initiatives is delivered? If not, what is the extent and nature of the dissatisfaction and how could it be addressed?		✔		✔	
15. How effective is the accountability regime with a delivery mechanism involving federal and provincial partners? Are there problems with the accountability framework which impact negatively on the success of the operational implementation of the support for Learning Initiatives?		✔	✔		

3.2.2 Literature Review

The initial information and materials for the literature review were gathered during briefings with several key HRDC staff and the evaluation team. The information from these meetings assisted the team in organizing the report into the broad issues and questions surrounding the learning goals and a review of the concept of learning in relation to the human lifespan sequence (starting with the primary and secondary system, moving on to transitions of employment and then examining adult learning while in the labour force).

Documentation was solicited from ministries of education from several Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, and supplemented with document searches at HRDC, libraries and Internet searches on international literature. An additional effort was undertaken to locate information using the Internet, CD-ROM databases such as Socio-file, Willson, and the American and Canadian version of ERIC (education research index). The literature review developed as part of this study is submitted separately.

3.2.3 Survey Set Review

The evaluation team examined published reports and academic publications to determine the extent to which the surveys funded by Learning Initiatives were cited. Publications

were reviewed to identify survey data on the following indicators that were selected at the beginning of the formative evaluation and approved by HRDC:

- trends in post-secondary training take-up and completion rates;
- employer support of workplace and non-workplace training;
- penetration of new technology delivery methods;
- expectations of ongoing expenditure on training;
- extent to which training is required by employers or actively sought by employees;
- extent to which pre-employment vocational and non-vocational training and education is required by employers; and
- improved empirical evidence on school-to-work transition, youth unemployment, and school retention rates.

A total of 37 publications citing the surveys were reviewed and analyzed against the indicators identified above. Unfortunately, due to the long time delays between the conduct of the survey and the publishing of results, very few of these publications actually cited the versions of the surveys that had received funding through Learning Initiatives. The evaluation team did use the analysis to identify relevant details for further discussion.

3.2.4 File Review

The evaluation team reviewed the HRDC files of all projects that had received funding through Learning Initiatives. In total 72 project files were identified, of these 64 project files were located and reviewed. The evaluation team was unable to locate eight files and was additionally unable to locate contracts for 24 of the projects.

Project files were reviewed for the following elements:

- contracts;
- financial and accountability information;
- progress and final reports;
- information on client satisfaction;
- correspondence (intra- and interdepartmental communication, such as memoranda and letters);
- partnership arrangements;
- project descriptions and objectives; and
- other project background information.

Files were analyzed for the extent to which partnerships had been developed through the projects and the nature of the partnerships developed. Five types of partnerships were defined:

- **Informal:** No direct agreements between partners but an understanding that there would be mutual consultation;

- **Associative:** Members of the partnership formed part of a larger organization that may have belonged to a formal partnership;

- **Formal:** Two partners working together continuously, sharing resources and funds on a broad range of projects or initiatives;

- **Contractual:** Formal, legal agreements; and

- **Sponsorship:** Transfer of funds from one party to another.

The information gathered from these sources was entered into templates for further analysis. The template organized information according to project name, duration, responsible HRDC manager and officer, full time equivalent per annum when applicable, learning initiative budget, total budget, a brief project description, project structure and activities, the HRDC management team, the contractor's delivery team, possible partner organizations, project outputs, impacts or effects on the target audience for each project, and a breakdown for government fiscal years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998 of each project.

The information recorded in the detailed templates was analyzed and presented in aggregate in the evaluation framework template to ensure consistent presentation of findings.

3.2.5 Interviews

An interview guide was developed based on the evaluation framework to ensure that the same questions would be asked of each interview respondent. The interview guide probed for additional information identified through the literature review, the survey sets analysis, and the file review.

The selection of possible interviewees for this evaluation was based on the file review and client suggestions. Ninety interviews were conducted over the telephone by an experienced, senior interview team. Each interview lasted for one hour. The distribution of interview respondents was as follows:

- 31 federal government officials;
- 8 provincial government officials;
- 10 private sector respondents;
- 8 non-profit organizations;
- 20 national organizations; and
- 13 educational institutions.

A total of 120 potential interview respondents were selected to be interviewed. Of those selected for an interview, 10 interview contacts could not be located and 20 refused to be interviewed.

All interview responses were captured in the standardized interview guide and were entered into an electronic database created specifically for the evaluation study. No validity or reliability tests were conducted, the individual responses were analyzed using quantitative (frequency tabulations and percentages) and qualitative analyses and were

recorded within the evaluation framework template in order to ensure consistent presentation of findings.

3.2.6 Focus Groups

Ten focus groups were held in five Canadian cities: Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver, Halifax and Montreal. In each city, two focus group sessions were hosted and facilitated by the evaluation team. Focus group sessions included employers, union representatives, employees, students, parents, guidance counsellors, educators, provincial government officials, and representatives of other learning organizations. Of the 201 people contacted, 72 participants confirmed their attendance and 43 people participated in the focus groups in the various cities.

Each focus group involved a three-hour session. A standard focus group protocol was developed to ensure consistency among groups. Each session included a brief presentation of Learning Initiatives followed by an informal discussion which probed participants' thoughts about the role of government, partnership, and information dissemination. In addition, each group discussed the three project categories of national learning goals, measurement tools, and information dissemination. One of the sessions in Montreal was conducted in French. All other sessions were conducted in English.

At the end of the session, the focus group participants were invited to provide feedback to the evaluation team on the focus group. All participants found the exercise interesting however, many expressed that they would have liked to know more about Learning Initiatives before the session. Detailed records of each focus group discussion were prepared and sent to focus group participants for validation. The information was analyzed, aggregated, and entered into the evaluation framework template.

3.2.7 Expert Panel

The purpose of the expert panel was to draw on the collective experience of expert practitioners in the field to further analyze the program design, implementation and success. Results gathered also enabled the evaluation team to both ensure the consistency of its findings to date and to identify future actions that would assist in the attainment of Learning Initiatives objectives.

The expert panel was comprised of eight learning experts representing the western, eastern and central regions of Canada. Individuals were selected for their expertise in relation to the three components of the Learning Initiatives program (national learning goals, the refinement and expansion of measurement tools, and the dissemination of information applicable to labour market and learning issues in Canada).

The group met on October 29, 1997 at the Ottawa office of Coopers & Lybrand. The agenda involved an opening presentation outlining the background, description and organization of the Learning Initiatives program. Three sessions focused on the components of the program. A report of the expert panel proceedings was developed and suggestions received from the experts were incorporated into the preparation of the final report.

3.2.8 Summary

The methodology for this formative evaluation pursued multiple lines of evidence to access as much information as possible about the implementation, activities and outputs of Learning Initiatives. Data was analyzed employing both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques and aggregated into an evaluation framework template to permit consistent, focused analyses.

4. Project Profiles

Seventy-two projects have been funded through Learning Initiatives during its first three years and have been well received by stakeholders. Of the 72 projects, 45 have been completed. All 72 projects met the eligibility criteria for funding. The file review indicates that the outputs from completed projects are consistent with the commitments made in the project proposals. The remaining projects are still under way and at different stages of implementation. The following chapter presents a profile of the projects funded under each of the three major categories of Learning Initiatives and describes the project implementation and outputs (for a complete listing of all 72 projects and for full project descriptions, see Appendix A).

4.1 The Development of National Learning Goals

Learning Initiatives has funded 32 projects that address specific issues related to the development of learning goals.

4.1.1 Implementation

All of the projects funded had a direct link to the overall goal of establishing national learning goals although most dealt with fairly specific issues. The distribution of the types of projects is as follows:

- 13 research projects;
- 5 projects sponsoring national conferences around educational issues including parental involvement in schools and the mobility of students (i.e., Partnerships in Schools — a conference held jointly by the Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation, and CUSEC held a conference around increasing mobility of university and college students within Canada);
- 4 projects established new learning programs or organizations (e.g., Miramichi);
- 7 projects focused on the development of new materials, videos, manuals, or other communication materials; and
- 3 projects contributed to the sponsorship of national awards programs or skills competitions.

The specific learning needs addressed by these programs included:

- assessments of the level of integration between community services and educational services for children;
- mechanisms such as partnerships to secure increased involvement in learning;
- services for physically disabled students and students with learning disabilities;
- the development of appropriate learning goals for native students;
- increased competence in science and engineering disciplines;
- researching student mobility within Canada;
- prior learning assessment for university and high-school graduates;

- the creation and recognition of partnerships in learning between business, school and universities, parents, principals, teachers, students, and communities;
- lifelong learning;
- the development of performance standards;
- barriers to learning for students with disabilities; and
- the use of technology in learning.

4.1.2 Outputs

Twenty-five of the funded projects are complete and all of the completed projects have delivered the intended output although the outcomes of most of these projects are not known because most have not undertaken formal evaluations to date. No client satisfaction surveys were undertaken for the majority of the projects.

Outputs have included:

- research reports;
- conference proceedings;
- the development of a mentoring program for students with disabilities;
- the development of new learning materials for youth;
- videos were produced including a documentary entitled *"Women in Engineering: If You Can Find a Better Way"* ;
- the development of national learning practice manuals and handbooks for communities, teachers and students;
- skills competition results;
- education awards provided to recipients; and
- the development of a new learning technology centre (Miramichi).

4.2 The Refinement and Expansion of Measurement Tools

Learning Initiatives funded a total of 27 projects under the refinement and updating of measurement tools.

4.2.1 Implementation

Four previously existing surveys are currently fully or partially funded through Learning Initiatives as determined through the file reviews, correspondence from HRDC, and interviews with HRDC and Statistics Canada officials:

- School Leavers Survey;
- National Graduates Survey;
- Adult Education and Training Survey; and
- International Adult Literacy Survey.

In addition, a new measurement tool is being developed, the International Life Skills Survey.

Three additional surveys that were originally planned to receive input and funding from Learning Initiatives — The Survey of Labour Income Dynamics, the National Training Survey, and the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth — did not receive the anticipated funding due to shifting priorities at Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). The projected funding for these surveys was reprofiled into the School Leavers Survey, the National Graduates Survey, and the International Life Skills Survey. Although these surveys were not funded, the initial areas of interest to HRDC in funding measurement tools, namely employability skills, literacy skills, and adult training are addressed through the five surveys described above.

Of the 22 remaining projects:

- 3 focused on the funding of learning forums and federal participation in these forums;
- 8 provided funding for national conferences (i.e., Canadian School Boards Association's 1995 Congress on Education, and Canada's National Skills Competition to promote the recognition and value of trade and technical occupational training for youth);
- 6 funded learning research;
- 2 funded policy projects (i.e., Sussex Circle's Strategic Policy paper on a federal youth strategy);
- 2 focused on the development of national indicators to describe education and learning in Canada in all areas, from pre-school through lifelong learning; and
- one sponsored an awards program for partnerships.

Several of the research projects focused on expanding knowledge about best practices in learning.

4.2.2 Outputs

The project outputs from the funding of national surveys are:

School Leavers Survey

The follow-up to the School Leavers Survey received some funding from Learning Initiatives.

The two surveys, School Leavers Survey (1991) and Follow-up (1995) are paired indicative that the surveys included the same group of individuals. The School Leavers Survey 1991 was commissioned by Employment and Immigration Canada (April-June 1991) and was used to obtain demographic background, school experience, and post-school labour market and other outcome measures of school continuers, graduates or leavers on 18-to-20-year-olds.

The Youth in Transition Survey is currently in development and its objective is not to be as retrospective as the School Leavers Survey 1991 and the 1995 Follow-up but to be a longitudinal survey. The first phase of Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) collection, scheduled for 1999, will focus on a cohort of young adults aged 18 to 20. The second phase, planned for 2000, will collect data for a large sample of youth aged 15, selected from schools. A greater focus will be placed on education, specifically, the impact of school streamlining on education and the employment pathway.

National Graduates Survey

The National Graduates Survey has been conducted since 1978. The most recent survey conducted, the 1997 survey of 1995 graduates, was funded by Learning Initiatives. The National Graduates Survey collects labour market information about the supply of highly skilled or qualified labour two years and five years after graduation and captures school-to-occupation labour market transition.

The history of the National Graduates Survey can be summarized as follows:

- In 1978, Statistics Canada conducted a survey on labour market experiences of 1976 graduates from universities and community colleges in Canada; financed by the Department of the Secretary of State.

- In 1984, a similar survey the National Graduates Survey of 1982 graduates was sponsored jointly by the Department of the Secretary of State and Employment and Immigration Canada and conducted by Statistics Canada. The 1984 survey expanded on the content of the previous survey and extended the population base to include completers of trade/vocational programs in addition to graduates from community colleges and universities.

- In addition, Statistics Canada conducted for HRDC:

  — in 1987, Follow-up of 1982 Graduates;
  — in 1988, Survey of 1986 Graduates;
  — in 1991, Follow-up of 1986 Graduates;
  — in 1992, Survey of 1990 Graduates;
  — in 1995, Follow-up of 1990 Graduates; and
  — in 1997, Survey of 1995 Graduates.

The National Graduates surveys are constantly modified and improved, however consistency of questions is required to provide a baseline for the comparison of the collected data (e.g., The Follow-up of 1990 Graduates included a skill section as skills requirement gained more importance).

Prior to the 1997 Survey of 1995 Graduates, Statistics Canada conducted an evaluation for HRDC to improve the contents of the survey. The changes recommended to the survey following reviews are to collect more information on the following:

- **Education:** education prior to graduation, specificity on the program completed in 1995, an evaluation of educational program and institutional services, education pursued after graduation, opinion on the pursuit of a Ph.D. and student financing;

- **Labour-Market Experiences:** work experience prior to graduation, first job after graduation, current employment situation, employment/unemployment pathway since graduation and satisfaction with employment; and

- **Skills Development, School-to-Work Transition, Volunteer Activities after Graduation and Demographic Characteristics.**

Response to the survey has been positive although concern was indicated with respect to the length of time from information collection until the results are published. HRDC recognizes that the time period needs to improve and is working with Statistics Canada to ensure more timely publications. The National Graduates Survey has provided information for career counselling publications developed by HRDC, the development of federal student loans policies and by provincial governments to demonstrate labour market outcomes of graduates from various levels of post secondary education.

Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS)

The Adult Education and Training Survey has been conducted by Statistics Canada since 1984 including in 1986, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998. Funding was provided through Learning Initiatives for the analysis of the data for the 1994 survey. Each survey differed regarding the topics covered and the number of questions asked, providing a uniquely comprehensive portrait of adult education and experiences in Canada. The 1998 survey was conducted after a content review to enhance the policy relevance of the survey.

HRDC has conducted a review to evaluate the content of the AETS and has revised the survey to enhance the policy relevance of the questions asked. Consequently, the questionnaire has evolved into a more detailed and comprehensive survey instrument with greater emphasis on profiling the role of the employer and the identification of potential barriers to training by persons 17 and over. This survey is scheduled to continue to be conducted every two years.

International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)

The International Adult Literacy Survey, conducted in the fall of 1994 and published by the OECD and Statistics Canada in 1995, was a seven country initiative and the first of its kind. The Survey provides an updated profile of adult literacy skills from the 1989 Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA) and creates comparable literacy profiles across national, linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The Survey provided better data on several sub-populations of particular national policy interest; determined the relationship between performance, educational attainment, labour market participation and employment for those individuals found to be able to read but not able to do so very well; the survey tested the notion that the decoding and decision

making skills in Canadian and US assessments are stable across language groups and cultures and promoted the concept of literacy underlying the direct assessments conducted in the US and Canada.

The results demonstrated a strong plausible link between literacy and a country's economic potential. The analysis of survey results was partially funded by Learning Initiatives.

International Life Skills Survey

The International Life Skills Survey is a new measurement tool developed by HRDC and Statistics Canada. The survey is an extension of the IALS and includes more questions to capture skill domains like teamwork, problem solving skills, and the use of technology in the workplace. This survey is intended to be international in scope and there are already six countries that have participated in the development of this tool.

4.2.2.1 Outputs of Non-Survey Projects

Fourteen of the non-survey projects are now complete and the types of outputs resulting from these projects include:

- federal representation and sponsorship on the Canadian Education Association's Board of Directors;
- HRDC presented national awards to recipients;
- research reports on education issues; and
- conference proceedings on partnership meetings.

4.3 The Dissemination of Information Applicable to Labour Market and Learning Innovations in Canada

Thirteen projects were funded through Learning Initiatives under the information dissemination area.

4.3.1 Implementation

All of the thirteen projects funded under this area addressed a specific area of the production and dissemination of relevant information to learning system users. The types of projects funded include:

- four projects focused on the development and dissemination of publications (booklets and brochures);

- four projects focused on the development of software applications for the exploration of education and training paths as they relate to career planning, providing a way to develop a learning plan to a specified certification;

- one project involved the production and distribution of a video with a self-esteem and stay-in-school message;

- one project was the development of the program "Take Our Kids to Work Day";

- one project involved the development of a web page containing interactive descriptions of most Career Information products offered at HRDC;

- one project involved the preparation of a poster or wall chart describing occupational groups and examples of occupations within each, accompanied by a brochure for each occupational group; and

- one project involved the development of a national career information network.

4.3.2 Outputs

Six of the projects funded under this area are complete, the remaining seven projects are ongoing. The outputs from these six projects include:

- brochures;
- software applications;
- a national video and teaching materials; and
- a web site.

These outputs are consistent with expectations and have been disseminated as planned.

5. *Evaluation Findings*

The following chapter presents the major findings of the evaluation. The findings are presented according to the three major areas of funding: the development of national learning goals, the updating and improvement of measurement tools, and the dissemination of information about innovative learning practices and labour market information. Each section will present findings in the following categories:

- Partnerships;
- Role of Government;
- Communication;
- Project Administration and Accountability; and
- Summary.

In addition, an overview of the overall findings for Learning Initiatives is presented.

The analysis is based on the information collected from the survey sets analysis, file reviews, the interviews, the focus groups, and the expert panel. These data collection tools gathered information from government officials, delivery agents, clients, and other stakeholders. The results indicated that responses from these different groups were quite similar and are reported in this chapter as aggregated unless the responses of a specific respondent group differed from the others, in which case, the responses of this group are highlighted separately.

5.1 Overall Learning Initiatives Findings

Overall response to Learning Initiatives three years into its implementation has been positive although a number of areas for improvement were suggested by respondents.

There have been some obstacles to the implementation of Learning Initiatives which delayed the launch and completion of some projects. The requirement for partnerships and the time taken to negotiate meaningful partnerships was frequently cited as a challenge that delayed project implementation. Additional challenges that have delayed implementation and completion have included time constraints imposed by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and staff turnover at HRDC.

With respect to the objectives of Learning Initiatives, the focus appears to have been placed on the development of Pan-Canadian learning indicators, rather than the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals. Initially, it was intended that the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals would provide the first step toward a system that provided learning opportunities based on common goals and that the success of that system in accomplishing its goals could be assessed through the development of indicators that directly flow from the learning goals. No Pan-Canadian Learning Goals have yet been developed but work is continuing on the development of performance indicators.

The most consistent overall finding is that Learning Initiatives is not well known or understood by most stakeholder groups in the learning system. Many respondents indicated that with more knowledge about the intent and objectives of Learning Initiatives, they could have leveraged the work of their project with other projects to ensure a more powerful overall result. In addition, a number of delivery agents who had received funding were not aware that the funding had come from Learning Initiatives. The majority of focus group participants had never heard of Learning Initiatives and while many of the participants were aware of one or more of the funded projects, they did not know that the funding had come from Learning Initiatives.

Focus group participants discussed at length the role of the federal government in the learning system and concluded that the key roles include the provision of leadership on national education issues, facilitation, funding, and dissemination of learning activities. In addition, focus group participants indicated that a key role for HRDC is to disseminate information about its own programs and funding sources so that the educational sector can ensure that funded projects are undertaken that meet the sector's needs on a national scale. Focus group participants suggested that HRDC should publicize more information about Learning Initiatives through the web site, informative brochures, and a central point of contact or a 1-800 number.

Although it was reported that progress had been made in the implementation of Learning Initiatives, a number of respondents commented that a greater focus on the strategic direction of Learning Initiatives could have resulted in a program that would have responded more fully to the needs of the system stakeholders.

For the most part, delivery agents who have received funding through Learning Initiatives found the staff at HRDC helpful and believe that Learning Initiatives is making a meaningful contribution to the learning system. In addition, they found the accountability frameworks for funded projects reasonably easy to work with and did not find that the frameworks had in any way impacted on the implementation of projects. Focus group participants indicated that Learning Initiatives projects that had been funded appeared to meet existing needs and that they would have liked to take advantage of the projects.

Although the accountability frameworks (the framework specifying the responsibilities of HRDC and the delivery agents) were well received by most delivery agents, the file reviews did yield a number of inconsistencies in the overall design and implementation of Learning Initiatives. Because Learning Initiatives is more a collection of funded projects through different areas within HRDC than a formal program, the Initiatives have been implemented differently by different areas. There is no formal application process for Learning Initiatives and no separate financial coding for Learning Initiatives, making it difficult to track actual Initiative funding. Although progress reports were required, there is no standard and consistent mechanism for monitoring project progress. The file administration structure is inconsistent across areas in HRDC. During the file review, it was noted that a number of files (8) were lost or misplaced and could not be produced during the course of the evaluation. In addition, of the files reviewed, 24 were missing the actual project contracts.

Expert panel participants suggested that one person (internal or external to HRDC) should have liaison responsibility between the five areas administering Learning Initiatives within HRDC. This person would encourage linkages among the five areas and would prepare quarterly reports for the accountable Assistant Deputy Ministers highlighting progress and outstanding concerns about program performance.

Formal project evaluations and client satisfaction surveys are not required for projects funded through Learning Initiatives, making it extremely difficult to assess the impacts of individual projects or the overall impact of Learning Initiatives. The lack of project evaluations and client satisfaction surveys will create a particular challenge. Expert panel participants suggested that HRDC make a project evaluation a requirement of funding so that a certain percentage of the budget is directed to the evaluation component.

A consistent concern raised by delivery agents during the evaluation was the high turnover of HRDC project managers and staff. Respondents felt that the lack of continuity generated confusion and additional work for them to ensure that there was a good understanding of the projects by HRDC staff. This is compounded by the inconsistent file administration leading to difficulties in transferring knowledge to new staff.

5.1.1 Budget Analysis

Tracing and identifying the spending levels for Learning Initiatives was hampered by the fact that no specific financial coding exists for activities to be funded. The aforementioned, combined with several missing files, contracts, contribution agreements and disbursement receipts, further complicated the matter of assessing and verifying the spending levels for Learning Initiatives.

In the majority of cases, the level of spending was determined by comparing the statement of work and contract to disbursement receipts and contribution agreements. This information was then further verified with financial summaries and budget information to ensure, to the greatest degree possible, that the funds were budgeted and disbursed for activities under Learning Initiatives.

The rest of this section is based on a comparative budget found in Table 5 on the following two pages. The table compares the budgeted amounts as stated in the original plan[2] against the spending for the three completed fiscal years and the expected spending for fiscal years 1997 and 1998. The tables indicate for each fiscal year, the amount budgeted and the amount of spending which was verified through the file review exercise and through discussions with individuals in finance and other stakeholders. The acronym NF or "not found" indicates amounts that could not be verified as either the contribution agreement or disbursement receipts could not be located.

---

2 There are two entries under Measurement Tools which were not found on the original plan but have received or will receive some funding from Learning Initiatives. These two entries are the International Life Skills Survey and the Adult Education Training Survey.

As shown in the tables, the budgeted amount for Learning Initiatives over five years was $20 million; after evaluating Learning Initiatives $16,892,000, or 84.46 percent, were found to have been disbursed to March 1997 or expected to be disbursed over the next two years. The remaining $3,108,000 or 15.54 percent could not be verified because no direct link could be found to Learning Initiative projects. To March 1997 the budgeted amount was $11,725,000 — of this amount $8,025,000 (or 76 percent) has been verified as disbursed.

TABLE 4
Comparison of Budgeted Expenditures vs. Disbursements

	National Learning Goals		Measurement Tools		Information Dissemination		Total	
	$000,000	%	$000,000	%	$000,000	%	$000,000	%
Budget	4.950	24.75	11.5	57.5	3.500	17.50	20.000	100.00
Verified Spending + Expected Spending for Fiscal 1997 and 1998	6.617	39.17	8.8	52.1	1.475	8.73	16.892	84.46

As shown in Table 4 below, when breaking down the budgeted and verified spending amounts by the three areas, Measurement Tools is the area which is budgeted to receive over half the funding with National Learning Goals and Information Dissemination making up the other 42.25 percent.

In examining the area of National Learning Goals it appears that this area is over budget by 14.42 percent. Loosely co-ordinated lines of authority, lack of stringent budgeting and financial policies and monitoring combined with each area operating in a silo with no overall accountability for the budgeting provides substantial reasons for overruns within Learning Initiatives.

The Measurement Tools area for the most part is on budget with a deviance of 5.4 percent under budget. The reasons for this stem, in part, from missing contribution agreements and the difficulty in locating contracts for the National Training Survey, employability skills (Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics) and the Adult Education Training Survey.

Information Dissemination is under budget by 8.77 percent. Similar to Measurement Tools the reasons for this seem to be the lack of verifiable files, contribution agreements and disbursement receipts in this area for projects including: Reprints of Career Information Brochures; Take Our Kids to Work Day; Native Video; Career Information on the Web; National Guide to College and University Programs; and Canadian Career Information Partnership.

TABLE 5
Comparative Budget ($ Millions)

Description	Total Budgeted	Total Spending Verified	1994 – 1995		1995 – 1996		1996 – 1997		1997 – 1998		1998 – 1999	
			Budgeted	Spending Verified	Budgeted	Spending Verified	Budgeted	Spending Verified	Budgeted	Expected	Budgeted	Expected
Learning National Goals												
(Vote 35)	3.95	5.017	0.5	1.122	1.0	1.604	1.025	1.366	0.925	0.925	0.00	0.00
(Vote 5)	1.5	1.6[3]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.685	1.1	0.915
SUB-TOTAL	**4.95**	**6.617**	**0.5**	**1.122**	**1.0**	**1.604**	**1.025**	**1.366**	**1.325**	**1.610**	**1.1**	**0.915**
Measurement Tools												
School Leavers Survey	1.8	1.8	0.2	0.2	0.15	0.15	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.8	0.45	0.45
National Graduates Survey	3.0	3.0	0.3	0.3	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5
National Training Survey	1.7	NF	0.2	NF	0.9	NF	0.6	NF	0.0	NF	0.0	NF
Survey of Labour Income Dynamics[4]	1.0[5]	NF	0.0	NF	0.35	NF	0.5	NF	0.15	NF	0.0	NF

3 Vote 5 refers to monies which were allocated for the most part under Measurement Tools, the projects relating to National Goals which represent this particular amount are SAIP (School Achievement Indicators Program) and Pan-Canadian Education Indicator Program.

4 Conducted under Employability Skills research as identified in the original plan.

5 Although the Survey of Labour Income Dynamics is the survey originally stated under this area in the original plan, no evidence was found to suggest that this survey was completed.

TABLE 5 (continued)
Comparative Budget ($ Millions)

Description	Total Budgeted	Total Spending Verified	1994 – 1995		1995 – 1996		1996 – 1997		1997 – 1998		1998 – 1999	
			Budgeted	Spending Verified	Budgeted	Spending Verified	Budgeted	Spending Verified	Budgeted	Expected	Budgeted	Expected
National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth	1.2[6]	0.0[7]	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0
New Measurement Tools	2.8	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.8	1.8
SUB-TOTAL	**11.5**	**8.8**	**0.7**	**0.5**	**3.0**	**1.75**	**2.5**	**1.4**	**2.55**	**2.4**	**2.75**	**2.75**
Information Dissemination												
Labour Market & Career Planning Information Tools (Vote 5)	1.5	0.675[8]	0.45	0.279	0.6	0.149	0.45	0.247	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Best Practices Research (Vote 5)	0.8	0.3[9]	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Canadian Information Centre on International Credentials (Vote 30)	1.2	0.5[10]	0.2	0.1	0.25	0.1	0.25	0.1	0.25	0.1	0.25	0.1
SUB-TOTAL	**3.5**	**1.475**	**1.05**	**0.379**	**1.25**	**0.349**	**0.7**	**0.447**	**0.25**	**0.2**	**0.25**	**0.1**
Evaluation (Vote 5)	0.05	0.05									0.05	0.05
TOTAL[11]	**20.0**	**15.692**	**2.25**	**2.00**	**5.25**	**3.703**	**4.225**	**3.213**	**4.125**	**4.21**	**4.15**	**3.815**

6 Funding was to go to expansion of information on the literacy of parents.

7 Although evidence of disbursements was found, total spending could not be verified.

8 This amount has been increased by $140,245 which is the cost of the Education Learning Platform CD-ROM for which there is no fiscal year financial information.

9 This amount refers to the CEA (Canadian Education Association) Project called *Federal Representation on Board of Directors*. These monies were specifically tagged as "best practices" monies.

10 CICIC has received $100,000 per year from HRDC commencing in 1994. It is unknown at this time whether these monies came from the Learning Initiatives program.

11 Assessment of the budget attributable to the IALS or ILSS was not possible due to documentation problems. **This may have been attributable, in part, to high staff turnover.**

5.1.2 Summary

At present, Learning Initiatives is perceived as a loose collection of projects having very little administrative and funding interconnections with no overall strategic direction. HRDC officials, for the most part, do believe that they are making progress toward their overall goals and objectives but this is not well shared with the broader learning sector. While the management of these Initiatives across a number of areas in HRDC does allow for flexibility and responsiveness, the level of inconsistency was noted as complex and confusing for stakeholders.

5.2 Establishment of National Learning Goals

The evaluation findings indicate that no Pan-Canadian Learning Goals have been established to date. Learning Initiatives has provided funding to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) to support the development of Pan-Canadian performance indicators in learning but not for the development of goals.

One participant on the expert panel indicated that work is under way to work toward the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals, building on the work accomplished by provincial Ministers of Education at the Victoria Declaration in 1993. She reported that regular feedback sessions are scheduled between CMEC, HRDC, and Statistics Canada. In addition, although this work is regional rather than national, both the western provinces and the maritime provinces have begun discussions on the development of learning goals. Learning Initiatives has funded some projects that address specific issues related to the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals. Expert panel members indicated that Learning Initiatives has demonstrated progress on developing "pieces" of the Pan-Canadian Learning Goals but the pieces need to be brought together.

Concerns about the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals were expressed during interviews, the focus groups, and the expert panel with respect to the recognition of the need to foster diversity and the need to be able to adapt to local needs. Consensus was expressed around the ability to be flexible and the lack of flexibility that could result from Pan-Canadian Learning Goals. Participants agreed that it was also important to engage in continuous feedback to ensure that goals and resulting indicators remain relevant and recognize diverse requirements. The feedback loop begins with research, the results of the research encourage public debate, information resulting from the debates is disseminated across the country, new issues and concerns are raised, new indicators are developed to respond to concerns and the feedback cycle begins again.

It was initially intended that Learning Initiatives would provide funding to the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) which is a national agency that provides information about the assessment of studies, degrees, and diplomas obtained in Canada and abroad. It was proposed that the funding would lead to the promotion of the collection and exchange of information on learning credentials and prior learning assessment. No evidence was found during the evaluation that CICIC had actually received funding through Learning Initiatives or that collaborative projects had been

undertaken. When contacted, CICIC indicated no knowledge of any of the Learning Initiatives activities.

5.2.1 Partnerships

All of the projects funded under the establishment of National Learning Goals exhibited evidence of partnership. Of the 32 projects funded under National Learning Goals, 23 of the projects secured contractual partnerships between stakeholders, a formal partnership was arranged for one project, four projects secured associative partnerships, and eight projects had informal partnership arrangements. A variety of project partnerships have occurred under the typologies listed, the partnerships were reported with a number of groups including associations, the private sector, universities and colleges, school boards and schools, guidance counsellors, students, federal departments, provincial governments, academics, and other jurisdictions.

Focus group participants indicated that the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals could only be successful if strong partnerships exist and there is commitment from all stakeholders in the system including the federal and provincial governments, business, local communities and educational organizations.

The majority of respondents reported positive experiences with respect to partnerships, particularly those among the three levels of government and the education community, although a small number of delivery agents viewed HRDC as more of a funder than partner. In terms of what has facilitated the development of these partnerships, most respondents indicated that it was common goals, longstanding relationships, and mutual concern for youth that sustained the partnerships and made them successful. Eighty-two percent of those interviewed indicated that the partnerships were crucial to the attainment of project goals and 87 percent reported continued goodwill from all the partners involved.

With respect to the lessons that had been learned about partnerships, respondents indicated:

- a common interest among partners is important;
- identifying the right partners is crucial for successful partnership;
- considerable effort should be expended at the beginning of the project to ensure that partnerships are appropriate and not just contrived to receive funding;
- partners need to make a full commitment to the project; and
- partners need to recognize that individual objectives may have to be sacrificed to accomplish overall project objectives.

5.2.2 Role of Government

Participants indicated that the role of the federal government should be to facilitate the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals and standards. The provincial and federal governments should work together to collaborate on the development of a national learning system. A number of focus group participants also indicated that other groups should participate in the development of the Pan-Canadian Learning Goals, including the education community and industry.

The role of HRDC was primarily oriented toward being a knowledge leader and a partner providing financial support, expert advice, information and guidance on the development of national goals. Surprisingly, 79 percent of the projects funded under the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals were funded only by the federal government, with only a further 21 percent also receiving funding from a provincial government. Interview respondents described an expectation that the provincial funding role would have been increased but believed that federal involvement in the funding of the projects is important to maintain a national focus. The provincial governments also fulfilled an implementation role with a small number of these projects. Only one project showed evidence of difficulty due to multilateral government participation.

Twenty-three percent of those interviewed believed that the roles for the federal and provincial governments have changed or will change during the implementation of the projects. Surprisingly, respondents indicated that the provincial governments have become more involved in the content of projects and their implementation and follow up once projects are complete.

5.2.3 Communication

Focus group participants indicated that information dissemination has been inadequate and that the federal government must take a leadership role in disseminating information so that awareness of the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals reaches all stakeholder groups and the public. Some focus group participants were aware of activities undertaken by the western provinces and the Atlantic provinces to develop their own sets of learning goals, but there was no awareness of any national efforts.

CMEC published a Report on Learning in 1995 entitled *Report on Education in Canada* which addresses work being undertaken in the development of learning goals from the perspectives of accountability, the quality and relevance of education and further reports are planned. The report is available through CMEC and is published on their web site. No evidence was found during the evaluation that HRDC provided any funding to the development of the Report on Learning. In addition, the Canadian Education Statistics Council published *Education Indicators in Canada* in 1996 on the progress toward the development of Pan-Canadian education indicators.

Consultation has taken place through CMEC on the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals and indicators. Expert panel members indicated that considerable consultation has taken place with a number of subgroups and special interest organizations on specific areas of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals development but that very little consultation has been directed at the broader level. These consultations do not appear to have impacted on the public who were largely unaware of activities to develop national learning goals. As was previously mentioned, CMEC does have a web site that can be accessed by the public.

Respondents indicated that information on other Pan-Canadian Learning Goals projects, (such as research projects; national conferences; new programs and organizations; videos and manuals; and national awards and skill programs) have been published and

disseminated through a variety of mechanisms. However, there was little evidence of measurable data to demonstrate the extent to which the information was received by key user groups or how it was used.

Only 5 percent of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals projects have completed a formal evaluation or had one under way, but most indicated that the information is in use with positive results. Examples of results cited include the creation of new school curricula and provincial and federal consideration of policy changes such as increasing parental involvement in Canadian schools, as well as improving the student loan policies. Forty percent of the projects have undertaken client satisfaction surveys, the results of these surveys have been largely positive and where these have been part of an ongoing project, efforts are being made to address client concerns. Additional indicators of client satisfaction include the large number of participants in conferences and orders submitted to receive reports and published materials.

A specific objective of Learning Initiatives was the dissemination of best practices in the teaching of math and science. Two projects that specifically addressed this issue, *Increasing Access to Science Education for Young Women: Youth Engineering and Science Camps and Women in Engineering: If You Can Find a Better Way,* were funded and completed, although it was not possible to ascertain the extent to which best practice information has actually been disseminated to the education community.

The lessons that have been learned with respect to information dissemination include:

- all stakeholders should be aware of project results and outputs; and
- the dissemination of project results and outputs should be planned early in the project.

HRDC officials who were interviewed during the evaluation indicated that appropriate information dissemination has been a real issue of concern for them and is an area where improvement is required.

5.2.4 Project Administration and Accountability

A review of the files for projects funded under the establishment of national goals objective demonstrated that the files were organized and contained all information required. Although there is no specific financial coding for Learning Initiatives, all project files contained disbursement receipts enabling reviewers to trace them back to Learning Initiatives. The area has clear administrative structures which enables effective HRDC project management and clear lines of authority and accountability.

Delivery agents indicated that the accountability framework has worked well and has been an advantage because having clear reporting and project management requirements forced advance project planning and progress monitoring. Most respondents suggested that although the accountability framework did create additional work for them, they believed it met a need in maintaining a consistent administrative structure and accountability. Most respondents indicated that the framework did not impact on project implementation although several delivery agents indicated that there was more of a focus on delivery

under tight time frames than the project results, which in some cases were limited by time constraints. HRDC officials also raised concerns about the lack of an accountability framework linking funded projects to overall Learning Initiatives objectives.

Respondents indicated that the lessons they had learned with respect to the project accountability framework included:

- the need for a standardized financial template;
- the need for greater reporting and project management flexibility;
- the need for increased communication between HRDC officials and delivery agents; and
- the need for stability in HRDC project management.

5.2.5 Summary

There has been some progress made toward the development of both broad and specific learning goals, but the level of awareness of the development of learning goals and the associated progress is low.

Overall, the majority of respondents noted positive experiences with the various forms of partnerships. Two factors were identified as being critical in the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals: ensuring that right partners were matched together and ensuring commitment from all partners.

The federal government was identified as needing to adopt a leadership role in the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals. However, it was reported that it is important for the provincial and federal governments to work together.

There has been great difficulty in measuring the extent to which information has been utilized by key groups. A useful way in which to monitor and determine the success of the learning goal projects is through formal evaluations and client satisfaction surveys, only 5 percent of the projects had completed the first while 40 percent completed the latter.

Finally, the project administration and accountability were fairly well organized and contained all the information required. The delivery agents indicated that the accountability framework had not hindered project progress and had been helpful from a project management perspective.

5.3 The Refinement and Expansion of National Measurement Tools

The original plan outlined commitments to enhance the following surveys: National Graduates Survey, the Survey of Labour Income Dynamics, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, the National Training Survey, and the School Leavers Survey. It also committed that additional measurement tools would be developed to fill gaps in existing measurement tools once measurable goals and indicators are developed.

Five surveys have received funding through Learning Initiatives. Four of the surveys are existing surveys: The School Leavers Survey, the National Graduates Survey, Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS) and the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS); and one new survey is under development, the International Life Skills Survey (ILSS). These surveys are developed through long-standing partnerships with Statistics Canada and a panel of expert advisors.

The funding of the National Graduates Survey has resulted in revisions to include more questions on student satisfaction, educational history, skills development, and student financing. The funding of the AETS has contributed to a comprehensive review of the content of the survey. The survey is being revised to enhance the policy relevance of the questions asked.

The funding of the School Leavers Survey has resulted in the availability of ongoing, consistent and essential information on the school-to-work transitions. It has also resulted in the addition of questions to the survey focused on reading and writing skills. There was also evidence of a significant contribution to the common body of knowledge. The additional information will permit better estimation of leaver rates, and more refined analyses of labour market experience and the transition between high school, the labour force and additional education and training. For example, the 1991 School Leavers Survey indicated that 18 percent of 20-year-olds had left high school without receiving a high school diploma or its equivalent. Four years later, the 1995 School Leavers Follow-up Survey revealed that a good portion of these leavers had returned to the classroom. By 1995, the rate of school leavers had dropped to 15 percent among this same group of young people at age 24. Looked at another way, one in four of those who were leavers in 1991 had returned to school and become a graduate by 1995.

The funding of the IALS was used to analyze the most recent survey data. It is anticipated that a contribution will be made to the common body of knowledge. This contribution will be made through the full development of The International Life Skills Survey (ILSS). ILSS is based on IALS and is a comparative survey to identify and measure a range of skills that are linked to social and economic success in the adult population (age 16-65) of participating Organization for Economic Development (OECD) countries. ILSS seeks to establish empirical measures of generic skill clusters that transcend industry, occupation, educational qualifications, and age-based experience.

ILSS advances the knowledge base in several ways:

- it builds on the knowledge gained from the 1994 IALS by adding five skills that are new to international assessments (numeracy, computer literacy, problem-solving, interpersonal skills and practical cognition);
- it detects relationships among variables that are seldom revealed in national studies but are more likely to emerge within a cross-cultural perspective;
- it aims to support the development of thoughtful and fair policy responses to literacy and basic competency skill deficits;

- it repeats two skills measured in IALS (prose literacy and document literacy); and
- it provides participating countries with access to the entire public-use data file after it has been vetted for confidentiality.

Two additional surveys were identified in the original plan to receive Learning Initiatives funding: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), to include information on literacy of parents and the family learning environment, and the National Training Survey (NTS), to provide information on the private sector training effort. Our research indicated that Learning Initiatives funding had not been provided to these two surveys. The projected funding for these two surveys was reprofiled into the School Leavers Survey, the National Graduates Survey, and the ILSS. This was due to the fact that funding was no longer needed for the NLSCY and NTS surveys. A third commitment was made in the Treasury Board Submission to fund the development of a module surveying employers and workers on employability skills to be included in the Survey for Labour Income Dynamics. Funding was not provided to this activity through Learning Initiatives.

Expert panel members indicated that the surveys have been valuable and useful. However, they suggested that there are some accessibility issues associated with using the raw data collected through the surveys. Although this was a finding of the expert panel, privacy and confidentiality regulations prevent the dissemination of raw data. The availability of databases containing this data would be an extremely useful research tool. In addition, to derive a meaningful continuum of information, researchers need the ability to link data sets.

It was originally intended that a best practice report on learning would be published as stated in the June 10, 1994 original plan. We have not been able to locate this document. HRDC officials are not aware of the existence of this document or which area in the department was responsible for creating it.

5.3.1 Partnerships

The file review indicated considerable evidence of partnership in the measurement tool area. The number of formal partnerships that involve two or more partners working continuously together sharing resources and funding is highest in this area with a total of six projects involving formal partnerships that will likely evolve into long-term sustainable partnerships. In addition, two projects secured contractual partnerships, one had an associative partnership arrangement, and informal partnerships had been established on four projects.

All of the survey projects are being conducted in partnership with Statistics Canada and all regularly consult with a panel of experts in the learning field across the country. Partnerships with the ministries of education for the measurement tools indicators projects has been achieved through CMEC. Focus group participants suggested that the partnerships to develop measurement tools with Statistics Canada lends credibility to the surveys and that they are likely used more frequently by the educational sector because of Statistics Canada's involvement.

Focus group participants indicated that partnerships in the area of measurement tools is critical to ensure that measures are relevant and address the right learning issues.

Many of the partnerships in these projects represent long-standing relationships between partners. Partnerships achieved through these projects include a number of stakeholders including federal departments, provincial governments, the private sector, associations, and the education community. One interview respondent indicated that with respect to the survey development, HRDC and Statistics Canada did not seek as many partnerships with other stakeholder groups as possible. Seventy-seven percent of those interviewed, indicated that partnerships have evolved between the federal government and the education community in the measurement tools area. Ninety-one percent of respondents indicated that these partnerships have been facilitated by common interests and goals and good communication among the interested parties. Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated that these partnerships have been crucial to the attainment of project goals and 64 percent reported continued goodwill and momentum amongst partners.

Lessons that were learned with respect to partnerships included:

- ongoing commitments from all partners is required;
- informing and consulting with partners is important;
- partners need to be sensitive to the needs of other partners; and,
- the project objectives must be clear from the beginning.

5.3.2 Role of Government

Focus groups believed that measurement tools is an appropriate area for federal government involvement. Participants believed that the major role for the federal government should be to fund the surveys and to ensure that there is no duplication or redundant information collected. Both the provincial and federal levels of government, should fund research and conduct realistic evaluations of the learning system based on empirical information.

The role of the federal government in the measurement tools projects has been consistent with focus group suggestions in that it has primarily funded projects, supplied advice and expertise, collected, analyzed and distributed information. The provincial governments provided advice and input, reviewed surveys, funded additional survey components, reviewed the outcomes of the surveys, and identified implications for policy decisions. The involvement of CMEC has encouraged stronger linkages among the federal and provincial governments. In the development of survey tools, HRDC and Statistics Canada consult with each province on the content and conduct of the survey. Sixty-two percent of respondents indicated that these roles have not changed since the inception of the project, while 17 percent indicated that the federal and provincial government roles have become more direct and involved than had originally been anticipated.

5.3.3 Communication

In general, measurement tools information resulting from the surveys and other measurement tools projects has been communicated. Conference proceedings were shared with participants and research reports have been circulated to policy makers in the federal and provincial governments, national associations and school boards. HRDC publishes a regular bulletin to a distribution list of 3,500 individuals and several research papers which contain information and analyses from funded projects. Apart from the contributions to academic discussion, it was not clear from the files or the interviews whether the information gained from funded projects was received by key user groups or how the information was used.

Survey results are published and available for purchase by the public. In addition, media releases are distributed by Statistics Canada when survey reports are issued. Interview respondents indicated that media coverage has been positive. According to Statistics Canada, the demand for reports on three of the surveys (School Leavers Survey, National Graduates Survey, and the IALS) has been quite high indicating that dissemination of that information has occurred. However, it has been difficult to assess how survey reports have actually been used by the learning system beyond contributions made to academic and policy discussions. One outcome of the IALS is the federal government's recognition that plain, simple language (Grade 8 level) is required when communicating with the public. An evaluation on the IALS conducted by the Alberta government did indicate that the results of survey had been disseminated and used by stakeholder groups.

Interview respondents indicated that the School Leavers Survey has provided information that has dispelled a commonly held misconception that the high school dropout rate was considerably higher than it actually was.

The analysis of the publications citing the results of surveys demonstrated that a number of publications cite these results but we found little evidence of actual policy or practice changes directly resulting from survey findings. In fairness, it is difficult to assess policy changes in a formative evaluation where the primary focus is on assessing implementation, design, delivery and outputs, not outcomes. The analysis of publications citing the survey results did indicate that information is being collected on school-to-work transition, youth employment, and school retention rates. Specifically, reference was made to the data contained in the 1995 Follow-Up of the 1991 School Leavers Survey (Frank 1996; Canada 1997) demonstrating that high school leaver rates were lower in 1995 than 1991 and that school-to-work transition is facilitated by having a high school diploma (Canada 1997) and the most recent IALS demonstrating the link between literacy and employment (Clark 1996; Crompton 1996; Educational Testing Service, 1996, Wilms 1997; Bloom 1997; Canada 1997). Expert panel members indicated that where it has been possible, surveys are now able to collect information on key learning indicators but that it is impossible to identify the incremental value provided by Learning Initiatives.

With respect to best practices in the teaching of math and science, the file review indicated that the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) was funded under the measurement tools area of Learning Initiatives. The project assessed intermediate and

senior high school students' competence in math and science and has published the results by province. Areas of excellent and weak performance do yield some information about best teaching practices and areas requiring improvement and provide information that can be used by provincial departments of education to make policy decisions on curricula development. HRDC has indicated that the fact that School Achievement Indications Program (SAIP) is cost shared 50 percent by the province and 50 percent by the federal government could be construed as one indicator that the information is valuable for supporting key policy decisions.

Skills competitions have emphasized performance in math but have not focused on teaching practice. Several focus group participants praised the skills competition projects as raising the profile of math and science with youth. The Exemplary Schools Project focused on the objective of identifying best practices within schools. The outputs of this project could provide a foundation for the development of specific best practice information on the teaching of math and science but this has not happened to date.

Focus group participants indicated some knowledge of the survey tools but felt that results needed to be more widely disseminated and in more innovative locations like small business development bureaus. One focus group participant indicated that HRDC must improve their relationships with the regions and disseminate information to all regions in a timely manner.

Program evaluations provide important information on the level of project progress. Client satisfaction surveys allow the end-users an opportunity to give feedback on their satisfaction with the program. Both provide valuable feedback for continual program improvement and alteration to meet the needs of the client population. None of the projects funded in the measurement tools area have undertaken formal project evaluations and only one had conducted a client satisfaction survey. Most respondents noted that the informal feedback they had received from clients was positive. With respect to communication, it is important to:

- communicate with all stakeholders;
- plan for the distribution of information at the beginning of the project; and
- identify who will be responsible for communicating project results.

5.3.4 Project Administration and Accountability

The administration of the project files under measurement tools was not well documented. The majority of files reviewed for these projects contained very few meeting notes or progress reports and updates. In addition, few files contained detailed budgeting or disbursement receipts. For some projects funded under this area, files are missing, incomplete, or not organized in a clear manner. Although the administration of the project files was weak, 72 percent of interview respondents indicated that they believed the accountability framework was at least adequate. Most believed that there was effective project administration with clear accountability requirements. Surprisingly, a few respondents did indicate that the framework was tiresome and bureaucratic. It did not appear that the framework impacted on the implementation of the projects, in fact, several

respondents indicated that the framework ensured that projects were on track and running smoothly.

With respect to the accountability frameworks, respondents indicated that HRDC staff had been helpful, although it was suggested that greater interdepartmental co-operation within the federal government needs to occur. In addition, it was noted that accountability needs to be directed toward the project process and relationships as well as outcomes.

5.3.5 Summary

The partnerships created for the development of measurement tools were primarily formal and multi-partner. Focus group participants agreed that Statistics Canada involvement with several projects provided a significant amount of legitimacy to the survey findings and analysis. Once again, commitment by all partners was a major theme raised in ensuring that the partnerships are a positive venture.

The provincial and federal roles with respect to measurement tools were the provision of funding and the provision of advice and input on the content and distribution of results. The major area of concern has been identified in the administration of the project files. The project files were incomplete and several files were missing. While respondents indicated that HRDC staff was generally helpful, increased interdepartmental co-operation among federal government departments is required.

Additional concerns were noted during the evaluation with respect to the dissemination of information to key user groups and stakeholders (policy makers, researchers, educators and youth). Although the expert panel reported these concerns, information on the surveys is currently disseminated in the form of a bulletin, research papers, and web sites.

5.4 The Dissemination of Information Applicable to Labour Market and Learning Innovations in Canada

Some progress has been made toward the dissemination of labour market and career information tools.

It was intended that Learning Initiatives would collaborate with the SchoolNet program sponsored through Industry Canada and that information collected through the information dissemination projects would be disseminated through SchoolNet. SchoolNet officials were aware of Learning Initiatives and had received some of the information developed through Learning Initiatives projects. Through SchoolNet, 9,000 schools now have access to the information highway. Originally, there were intentions to link Learning Initiatives with other related federal government programs such as the Office of Learning Technologies. No evidence of these linkages was found during the evaluation.

Expert panel members questioned whether the dissemination of labour market information was an appropriate objective for Learning Initiatives to undertake and

suggested that a more focused approach might concentrate on the linkage between the development of appropriate goals, indicators and measurement tools, and that information dissemination should focus on progress made in these areas. They further indicated that the dissemination of labour market information is a more appropriate long-term role for other areas of HRDC (e.g., the Centre for Career Information) and Industry Canada.

5.4.1 Partnerships

Many of the partnerships for projects under this area are longstanding partnership arrangements that were established before Learning Initiatives was launched. Of the projects reviewed in this area: two projects had informal partnerships and three involved associative partnership arrangements. One project entailed a contractual arrangement and one project involved a formal partnership. The partnerships that were established included the provincial governments, educational institutions and business.

Eighty-three percent of interview respondents indicated that partnerships between government and the education community were fostered to varying degrees and that involvement of the federal government was received well by the education community. One hundred percent of respondents indicated that awareness of the need for dissemination of career and labour market information and a sense of community responsibility have facilitated the development of partnerships. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated that the partnerships had been instrumental in the attainment of project goals while 17 percent commented that government "red tape" had hampered the achievement of goals. One hundred percent of respondents indicated that goodwill continues to exist among partners.

Focus group participants agreed that partnerships are crucial for effective information dissemination to occur. One group recommended that an information dissemination infrastructure should be established using regional and community groups to ensure that school-to-work transition information (career information) reaches target audiences at the grassroots level and that this transition material can be explained with respect to its appropriate uses within their own communities.

Participants indicated that with respect to partnerships, there is a need:

- to involve government, unions, and sector councils at the beginning of projects;
- for initial project planning;
- to develop formal partnership agreements; and
- to ensure that partnership agreements are transparent.

5.4.2 Role of Government

The role of HRDC was primarily a funding role, providing knowledge, advice and information as required. Where other levels of government were involved as primary delivery agents, HRDC provided a facilitation role. For 50 percent of the projects, HRDC was the only source of funding. In the remaining projects, both the provincial and federal levels of government were involved in the funding and dissemination of the information.

Two of the focus groups suggested that the federal government should be responsible for the creation of a national ministry of learning and should create a national technology infrastructure. Another group suggested that the federal government should manage overall dissemination of information and should reduce duplication between the three levels of government. The federal government should have a single window of career planning and labour market information. In addition, participants suggested that the provincial governments should create their own marketing packages on school-to-work transition and disseminate information to stakeholders themselves.

5.4.3 Communication

The file review indicated that documented progress has been made toward the production and distribution of publications, videos and kits for use by students and others in the learning system. Examples include a video prepared for native students, interactive products for career paths and post-secondary education, and information for small businesses. A number of Learning Initiatives projects demonstrated the use of technology such as web sites, software applications, CD-ROM products and other interactive media. Several focus group participants expressed concern about the trend toward the increased use of technology noting that those who most need the information, may have the least opportunity to access technology, such as rural communities in the north where many homes do not have electricity, and families who live in poverty. It was suggested that an array of dissemination techniques and products must be considered to ensure that appropriate information reaches everyone who needs it.

Eighty-three percent of interview respondents indicated that the products and information resulting from projects has been disseminated. In addition, respondents indicated that software and appropriate transition material have been disseminated.

Respondents indicated that with respect to lessons learned about information dissemination, planning the medium for dissemination in advance is crucial for these types of projects.

As mentioned in an earlier section, client satisfaction surveys and project evaluations are not a requirement of Learning Initiatives although they do provide information from the end-users and public on the uses of project results. The *Take Your Kids to Work Day* program, was the only project that has distributed client satisfaction surveys, which achieved a 92 percent satisfaction rating. It was also the only project to undertake a project evaluation, once again yielding positive results.

Respondents indicated that informal feedback on the remaining projects in the information dissemination area is positive and most indicate that participation is monitored. However, it is apparent from the information collected during this formative evaluation that in some cases, especially with the distribution of videos and brochures, it is not known where the materials were actually disseminated, what target audiences have accessed the information, and how the information has been used.

Expert panel members suggested that a more focused approach to the dissemination of labour market information should be adopted based on a specifically articulated information dissemination strategy. One HRDC official who was interviewed indicated that a needs analysis study is being designed to determine stakeholder needs, the uses of information already disseminated, and to identify issues related to the dissemination of career and labour market information.

Focus group participants also suggested that future information dissemination projects should identify school-to-work transition information for students with disabilities and other groups of students whose specific needs are not met through traditional career information.

5.4.4 Project Administration and Accountability

The administration of projects funded under the information dissemination area was sporadic and not well documented. The majority of files reviewed for these projects contained very few meeting notes or progress reports and updates. In addition, few files contained detailed budgeting or disbursement receipts. For some projects funded under this area, files were missing, incomplete, or not organized in a clear manner. In addition, project contracts were missing from a number of the files.

However, 67 percent of the interview respondents reported that the accountability frameworks have worked well and the framework facilitated, not hindered, the implementation of projects. Thirty-three percent of respondents indicated that the accountability frameworks were bureaucratic and slowed the process down. Half of these respondents indicated that this had impacted negatively on the implementation of projects.

With respect to lessons learned about project accountability, respondents indicated that:

- there is a need for more client contact;
- there needs to be more project continuity;
- there needs to be less staff turnover at HRDC; and
- there is a need to create strong and enduring partnerships.

5.4.5 Summary

Information dissemination projects, according to respondents and participants were seen to be meeting a need within the learning system. Progress has been made toward the development and dissemination of career planning and labour market information to support school-to-work transitions.

The partnerships formed for information dissemination were, for the most part, less formal than in other areas, with an emphasis on mutual consultation. A number of these partnerships were built upon longstanding relationships between the partners. A majority of respondents acknowledged that partnerships are a critical factor in attaining the project goals. However, an area of concern appears to be in the lack of information about how dissemination of information materials have been used and which stakeholder groups have actually successfully accessed the information.

The lack of appropriate administrative procedures in the maintenance of project files and project follow-up compound the difficulties associated with identifying actual recipients and uses of the information and materials resulting from the funded projects.

6. *Implications for Learning Initiatives*

The purpose of a formative evaluation is to conduct a review of program design and implementation and determine if the outputs to date are meeting the goals and objectives originally developed for the organization. The information derived from the evaluation findings can be used by the organization to make any corrections required to ensure that the organization's goals and objectives will ultimately be achieved. This chapter explores the implications of the evaluation findings for Learning Initiatives and highlights areas that may require some adjustment by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

6.1 Program Design and Administration

Learning Initiatives has not been implemented as a formal program at HRDC in the sense that there is no "Office of Learning Initiatives," no staff that are specifically attached to Learning Initiatives, no Assistant Deputy Minister with sole accountability for the program outcomes, and no separate financial code identifying Learning Initiatives funding. In addition, there are no standard application processes, no standard reporting requirements, and no standard practices for file administration and management. Learning Initiatives functions almost as a "virtual program" with shared responsibility across a number of areas within HRDC.

The advantage of this virtual model of program management is that the bureaucracy and expense normally accompanying a formal government program are reduced. In addition, it allows for flexibility in project funding and enables staff with relevant expertise within existing HRDC programs to both continue their ongoing program work and contribute knowledge to delivery agents receiving Learning Initiatives funding. The challenge for HRDC will be to preserve the positive effects of maintaining a "virtual Learning Initiatives program" while achieving a greater level of accountability and administration of project funding, and in creating clarity of communications and consistency of interface with its project delivery partners.

6.2 Learning Initiatives Strategy and Project Linkage

Related to the lack of a single point of co-ordination for Learning Initiatives is the lack of a shared strategic direction. The original plan did describe an overall learning strategy to be pursued under Learning Initiatives, but it is unclear from the evaluation findings whether the projects are assessed and funded as part of an overall strategic intent or whether project funding decisions are somewhat more ad hoc. Furthermore, it is not clear from a review of the funded projects if there is any linkage between the projects and whether there is any effort to leverage knowledge derived from one project to assist in the development of others. Partnerships in the delivery of projects will be more successful over the long term if partners have a clear sense of the overall desired outcome and the linkage of specific projects to that outcome.

There is an opportunity for HRDC to achieve considerable gains toward the achievement of the objectives of Learning Initiatives if the linkages between projects were emphasized so that gaps in projects that should be addressed are identified. This includes increasing awareness within HRDC of the projects funded by other areas of the department under Learning Initiatives. Expert panel members suggested hosting creative colloquia, bringing together all recipients of Learning Initiatives funding to share information and identify strategic linkages. In addition, greater linkages with other related government funded programs, such as the Office of Learning Technologies and SchoolNet, may assist in creating more powerful and meaningful results for all programs and may assist in addressing areas of challenge for Learning Initiatives (e.g., information dissemination).

6.3 Communication

An area of concern identified by HRDC officials, delivery agents, and focus group participants was the extent to which information resulting from projects funded under Learning Initiatives had been disseminated to key stakeholders groups that would make use of the information and translate it into practice. The evaluation findings yielded insufficient information to determine where the outputs had been delivered, who had received the outputs, and how those outputs had been used. In addition, there appeared to be some confusion about whether the delivery agents or HRDC were ultimately responsible for communications about project results.

The value of any output funded through Learning Initiatives can only be measured by how those outputs have translated into policy and practice or how they have been used. Some projects do have clear information about how information has been disseminated and used but most projects do not. The challenge for HRDC will be to determine how to ensure that information resulting from projects is appropriately communicated to stakeholders in the learning sector and to ascertain how it was used by those stakeholders. This is perhaps a part of the contractual agreements with delivery agents that needs to be more clearly defined at the outset so that accountability for dissemination is well understood. Another option may be for Learning Initiatives to facilitate a form of information management and information dissemination partnership arrangement whereby the partnership can assist in the communication of results on Learning Initiatives projects. An information management system for Learning Initiatives would also assist in providing a central source where information could be easily accessed and used.

6.4 Conclusions

Learning Initiatives has funded 72 projects that each provides some contribution to Learning Initiatives objectives.

No Pan-Canadian Learning Goals have been developed, although discussions are taking place. A consultative process with provincial governments via the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) toward the development of national learning goals is under way. Discussions appear to have focused on the development of performance indicators rather than the development of learning goals. Learning Initiatives officials must

determine if the development of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals is still an appropriate objective for Learning Initiatives.

Five surveys have received funding through Learning Initiatives. Four of the surveys are existing surveys: The School Leavers Survey, the National Graduates Survey, Adult Education and Training Survey and the International Adult Literacy Survey; and one new survey is under development, the International Life Skills Survey. These surveys are developed through longstanding partnerships with Statistics Canada and a panel of expert advisors. The funding of the National Graduates Survey has resulted in revisions to include more questions on student satisfaction, educational history, skills development, and student financing. The funding of the Adult Education and Traning Survey (AETS) has contributed to a comprehensive review of the content of the survey. The survey is being revised to enhance the policy relevance of the questions asked. The funding of the School Leavers Survey has resulted in the availability of ongoing, consistent and essential information on the school-to-work transitions. The funding of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was used to analyze the most recent survey data. The funding through Learning Initiatives was used to participate in the development of the new international measurement tool that captures skill domains like teamwork, problem solving skills and the use of technology in the workplace.

Thirteen projects have been funded under the Information Dissemination area. All of the projects focused on the development of specific materials on learning or on the labour market and their dissemination to users. Several of the projects funded were ongoing projects at HRDC which primarily entailed a shift in funding source. The data sources accessed during the evaluation indicated that most of the material produced under this area has been disseminated, but there was a lack of information about where the materials were sent and who had ultimately used them. Career information was disseminated electronically across Canada through the HRDC web site and CD-ROM products.

Members of the general public and many recipients of project funding do not know that Learning Initiatives exists. If they have heard of Learning Initiatives, they are not aware of its goals or objectives. There is a lack of documentation or other evidence on the communication of the results and outputs of a number of Learning Initiatives projects. HRDC needs to determine how to ensure that project outputs and resulting information are appropriately communicated and used by stakeholders in the learning system. Client satisfaction assessments would enable HRDC to assess the extent to which projects actually addressed client needs within the learning system.

There is no one area in HRDC that is responsible for Learning Initiatives and no single point of accountability. Five areas within HRDC manage Learning Initiatives funding and projects. The three areas of Pan-Canadian Learning Goals, Measurement Tools, and Information Dissemination are functioning as three distinct "silos" within Learning Initiatives with each area having very little knowledge of what is being undertaken by the other two. Learning Initiatives is not linked to other federal or provincial learning activities and there does not appear to be an overall strategic focus for project funding. The

challenge for HRDC will be to preserve the positive effects of maintaining a "virtual Learning Initiatives program" while achieving a greater level of accountability and administration of project funding. Increasing awareness within HRDC of Learning Initiatives projects and ensuring that potential synergies are identified, will assist in identifying project and funding gaps that need to be addressed through Learning Initiatives. There is an opportunity for HRDC to achieve considerable gains toward the achievement of Learning Initiatives objectives by developing a strategic focus to project funding.

Bibliography

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. *Cross-Canada Utilization of Findings and Data from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).* Final Report submitted to Statistics Canada by the Evaluation Branch, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. Alberta, Canada: 1997.

Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF). *Communications Strategy for the Release of Education Indicators for Atlantic Canada.* Halifax: APEF, 1996.

Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF). *Education Indicators for Atlantic Canada.* Halifax: APEF, 1996.

Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF). *Press Release-Draft.* Halifax: APEF, 1996.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Graduate Outcomes Technical and Further Education, Australia.* Canberra, Australia: 1995.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Participation In Education.* ABS Catalogue No. 6272.0. Canberra, Australia: 1996.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Schools.* ABS Catalogue No. 4221.0. Canberra, Australia: 1996.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Transition from Education to Work.* ABS Catalogue No. 6227.0. Canberra, Australia: 1996.

Barr-Telford, Lynn, Elaine Castonguay, Robert Pellarin. "Tracing Respondents: The Example of the School Leavers Follow-up Survey." *Education Quarterly Review.* Statistics Canada, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1995.

Barr-Telford, Lynn, Geoff Bowlby and Warren Clark. *The Class of 86 Revisited a compendium of findings of the 1991 Follow-up of 1986 Graduates survey with comparisons to the 1988 National Graduates Survey.* Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1996.

Betcherman, Gordon, Kathryn McMullen, Norm Leckie, and Christina Caron. *The Canadian Workplace in Transition. Final Report of the Human Resource Management Project.* Kingston, Ont.: Queen's University Industrial Relations Centre, IRC Press, 1994.

Betcherman, Gordon, Norm Leckie, and Kathryn McMullen. *Developing Skills in the Canadian Workplace: The Results of the Ekos Workplace Training Survey.* Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 1997.

Bloom, Michael, Marie Burrows, Brenda Lafleur and Robert Squires. *The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace.* Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 1997.

Canadian Education Association. *Inventory of Educational Research Units in Canada.* Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1995.

Canadian Education Association. *Secondary Schools in Canada: The National Report of the Exemplary Schools Project.* Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1995.

Canadian Education Association. *The National Report and the 21 Case Studies of CEA's Exemplary Schools Project.* CEA product catalogue. Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1995.

Canadian Education Association. *The Development of the Canadian Education Research and Information System (CERIS).* Proposal for funding to Human Resources Development Canada. Ottawa: Canadian Education Association, 1997.

Canadian Education Research and Information System (CERIS). *The Development of CERIS and its Relationship to HRDC Programs and Priorities — Background Notes.* CERIS, 1997.

Canadian Education Research and Information System (CERIS). *Welcome to CERIS.* An Introduction to CERIS. CERIS, 1997.

Canadian Education Research and Information System (CERIS). *Draft Outline of Content.* CERIS, 1996.

Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC). Guide to Terminology in Usage in the Field of Credentials Recognition and Mobility. Toronto: CICIC, 1996.

Castles, Ian. *Employer Training Expenditure, Australia July to September.* ABS Catalogue No. 6353.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993.

Castles, Ian. *Training and Education Experience.* ABS Catalogue No. 6278.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993.

Castles, Ian. *Employer Training Practices.* ABS Catalogue No. 6356.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1994.

Clark, Warren. *The Class of 1986: A compendium of findings of the 1988 National Graduates Survey of 1986 graduates with comparisons to the 1984 National Graduates Survey.* Ottawa: Employment and Immigration Canada, 1991.

Clark, Warren. "Adult Literacy in Canada, the United States and Germany." *Canadian Social Trends.* Statistics Canada, Winter, 1996.

Clark, Warren. "School Leavers Revisited." *Canadian Social Trends.* Statistics Canada, Spring, 1997.

Collard, Robert. "Adult Education and Training Survey-An Overview." *Education Quarterly Review.* Statistics Canada, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1994.

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. *School Achievement Indicators Program: Report on Mathematics Assessment 1993.* Toronto: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 1993.

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. *School Achievement Indicators Program: Reading and Writing Assessment 1994.* Toronto: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 1994.

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada with Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials. *Post-secondary Education Systems in Canada 1995-96 Volume 1.* Toronto: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, 1996.

Crompton, Susan. "Employment Prospects for High School Graduates." *Perspectives on Labour and Income.* Statistics Canada, Autumn, 1995.

Crompton, Susan. "The marginally literate workforce." *Perspectives on Labour and Income.* Statistics Canada, Summer, 1996.

Department of Supply and Services Canada, *Job Futures: Career Outlooks for Graduates.* Ottawa, Canada: 1996.

D.R. Harley Consultants Limited. *Final Report on Consultations in Preparations for the 1997 Survey of 1995 Graduates.* Report submitted to Statistics Canada. Ottawa: D.R. Harley Consultants, September 5, 1996.

Drouin. "Many Warnings Fail to Ease Workforce Literacy Woes (Statistics Canada)." *The Financial Post.* September 25, 1996.

Dwyer, Victor. "Measuring young minds." *Maclean's.* February 10, 1997.

Educational Testing Service. *ETS Policy Notes, News from the ETS Policy Information Center.* Princeton: Educational Testing Service, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer, 1996.

Ekos Research Associates. *Psychographic Analysis of Learning Attitudes and Behaviour.* Ottawa: Ekos Research Associates, November 12, 1993.

Ekos Research Associates. *Lifelong Learning and Self-Investment: Preliminary Analysis of Public Opinion and the Literature on Post-Secondary Education Financing and Student Debt.* Ottawa: Ekos Research Associates, April 25, 1995.

Ekos Research Associates. *Rethinking Government.* Ottawa: Ekos Research Associates, 1995.

Evans, Gwyneth. "Speaking from...National and International Programs." *National Library News.* September, 1996.

Finnie, Ross and Marie Lavoie. *The School-to-Work Transition of Engineering Graduates. A Cross-Cohort, Longitudinal Analysis of Four Major Decisions in the Engineering Career.* Research Paper prepared for Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada, February 1997.

Finnie, Ross and Saul Schwartz. *Student Loans in Canada: An Economic Analysis of Borrowing and Repayment Using the National Graduate Surveys.* Working Papers prepared for Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada, January 1996.

Frank, Jeffrey. *After High School, The First years. The First Report of the School Leavers Follow-up Survey, 1995.* Ottawa: Department of Public Works and Government Services, 1996.

Frank, Jeffrey. "After high school..." *Perspectives on Labour and Income.* Statistics Canada, Summer, 1997.

Gilbert, Sid. "Labour Market Outcomes for High School Leavers." *Perspectives on Labour and Income.* Statistics Canada, Vol. 5, No. 4, Winter, 1993.

Gilbert, Sid, Lynn Barr, Warren Clark, Matthew Blue and Deborah Sunter. *Leaving School.* Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1993.

Government of Canada. *Youth Employment and Learning Strategy to Lay Groundwork for Modernizing School to Work Measures.* News release introducing the Learning Initiatives Program. Canada: 1994.

Great Britain. *Results of the 1996 National Curriculum assessments of 14 year olds in England.* London: Department for Education and Employment, 1996.

Great Britain. *Results of the 1996 National Curriculum assessments of 11 year olds in England.* London: Department for Education and Employment, 1996.

Great Britain. *Results of the 1996 National Curriculum assessments of 7 year olds in England.* London: Department for Education and Employment, 1996.

Haigler, Karl O., Caroline Harlow, Patricia O'Connor, and Anne Campbell. *Literacy Behind Prison Walls. Profiles of the Prison Population from the National Adult Literacy Survey.* Washington D.C: U.S. Department of Education, 1994.

Hardwick, Catherine. "International Survey on Adult Literacy." *Perspectives on Labour and Income.* Statistics Canada, Summer, 1996.

Henchey, Norman. *The Development of Content.* A Working Paper developed for the Canadian Education Research and Information System (CERIS), 1996.

Hubka, David and Emer Killean. *Employment Opportunities for Post-Secondary Students and Graduates with Disabilities: A National Study.* Report submitted to Human Resources Development Canada by the National Educational Association of Disabled Students. Ottawa: Carleton University, 1996.

Hubley, Roger. *The HRDC Education and Training Surveys.* Draft — for comment only. Canada: Occupational Studies and Program Linkages/Human Resources Development Canada, 1995.

Human Resources Development Canada. *Applied Research Bulletin.* Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter, 1995.

Human Resources Development Canada. *Applied Research Bulletin.* Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter, 1995-96.

Human Resources Development Canada. *Applied Research Bulletin.* Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer–Fall, 1996.

Human Resources Development Canada. *Applied Research Bulletin.* Vol. 3, No. 1, Winter–Spring, 1997.

Human Resources Development Canada. *Preparations for the release of the International Adult Literacy Survey. Draft copy.* Ottawa, Canada: 1995.

Human Resources Development Canada. *Reading the Future; Portrait of Literacy in Canada.* Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1996.

HRDC. *Adult Education and Training in Canada, Report of the 1994 Adult Education and Training Survey.* Ottawa, Canada: Statistics Canada, 1997.

Industry Canada. *Agenda: Jobs and Growth, Building a More Innovative Economy.* Ottawa, Canada: 1994.

Jennings, Philip. *Employer-Sponsored Training in Canada: Evidence from the 1994 Adult Education and Training Survey.* Working Papers, Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada, 1996.

Jones, Stan. *Background for Canadian Basic Job Skills Test.* Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, 1996.

Kapsalis, Constantine. *Determinants of Employer-Sponsored Training: An Analysis of the 1994 Adult Education and Training Survey.* Research Papers prepared for Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada, August 1996.

Kapsalis, Constantine. *Employee Training: An International Perspective.* Ottawa: Data Probe Economic Consulting Inc., 1997.

Kirsch, Irwin S., Ann Jungeblut, Lynn Jenkins and Andrew Kolstad. *Adult Literacy in America. A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey.* Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1993.

Kirsch, Irwin S., Ann Jungeblut and Anne Campbell. *Beyond the School Doors, The Literacy Needs of Job Seekers Served by the U.S. Department of Labor.* U.S.: Department of Labor, 1992.

Krahn, Harvey. *School-Work Transitions: Changing Patterns and Research Needs.* Discussion Paper prepared for Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada, March 1996.

Lavoie, Marie and Ross Finnie. *The Accumulation of Technology: A Cross-Cohort Longitudinal Analysis of Recent Engineering Graduates.* Working Papers prepared for Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada, May 1996.

Lavoie, Marie and Ross Finnie. *The Early Careers of Engineers and the Accumulation of Skills in the Canadian Economy.* Research Paper prepared for Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996.

Lavoie, Marie and Ross Finnie. *The Occupational Dynamics of Recent Canadian Engineering Graduates Inside and Outside the Bounds of Technology.* Research Paper prepared for Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996.

Liberal Party of Canada. *Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada.* Ottawa, 1993.

Liberal Party of Canada. *Securing our Future Together.* Ottawa, 1997.

Little, Don and Louise Lapierre. *The Class of 90: A compendium of findings from the 1992 National Graduates Survey of 1990 Graduates.* Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1996.

McLennan, W. *Commercial Training Providers* ABS Catalogue No. 6352.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1994.

McLennan, W. *A Directory of Education and Training Statistics.* ABS Catalogue No. 1136.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1995.

McLennan, W. *Aspects of Literacy: Assessed Skill Levels.* ABS Catalogue No. 4228.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996.

McLennan, W. *Education and Training in Australia.* ABS Catalogue No. 4224.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996.

McLennan, W. *Employer Training Expenditure, Australia July to September 1996.* ABS Catalogue No. 6353.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996.

McMullen, Kathryn. *Skill and Employment Effects of Computer-Based Technology: The Results of the Working with Technology Survey 3.* Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 1996.

Nankivell. "Time for Canadian firms to invest in programs to upgrade literacy skills: occupations in demand require higher skills, report shows (Statistics Canada)." *The Financial Post.* September 17, 1996.

National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets (UK). *Skills for 2000, Supplement to the Report on progress towards the National Targets for Education and Training.* Sudbury, U.K.: Prolog, 1997.

Nikiforuk, Andrew. "A Light at the End of the Microscope." *Canadian Business.* April, 1997.

OECD and Statistics Canada. *Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the First International Adult Literacy Survey.* Ottawa: OECD and Minister of Industry, 1995.

Ontario. *For the Love of Learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning.* Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1994.

Ontario. *People and Skills in the New Global Economy.* Premier's Council Report. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1990.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and Statistics Canada. *Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the First International Adult Literacy Survey.* Ottawa: OECD and Minister of Industry, 1995.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). *Lifelong Learning For All.* Paris: OECD, 1996.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). *The Jobs Study.* Paris: OECD, 1994.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). *Measuring What People Know.* Paris: OECD, 1996.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators.* Paris: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, 1996.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). *Evaluating and Reforming Education Systems.* Paris: OECD, 1996.

Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP). *Education Indicators in Canada.* Toronto: Canadian Education Statistics Council, 1996.

Policy Research Committee. *Growth, Human Development, Social Cohesion.* Draft Interim Report. Canada: Policy Research Committee, 1996.

Skinner, T.J. Aspects of Literacy: Profiles and Perceptions. ABS Catalogue No. 4226.0. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996.

Statistics Canada. *Consultations in Preparation for Future Surveys on Youth and School-Work Transitions.* Final Report. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1996.

Statistics Canada. *National Graduates Survey: Improvement Associated with the Consultation with Data Users.* Prepared by the Education, Culture and Tourism Division, Statistics Canada. Canada: 1997.

Statistics Canada. Statistical Portrait of University Level Education (historical and current). Canada: Statistics Canada, 1996.

Statistics Canada, Special Surveys Division. *Survey of 1995 Graduates, Information Manual.* Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1997.

Supply and Services Canada. *Prosperity Through Competitiveness.* Consultation Paper. Ottawa, Canada: 1991.

Treasury Board. Submission of Proposal for Learning Initiatives Program. Canada: Human Resources Development Canada, 1994.

Tuijnman, Albert C., Irwin S. Kirsch and Daniel A. Wagner, eds. *Adult Basic Skills. Innovations in Measurement and Policy Analysis.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press Inc., 1997.

Voyer, Jean-Pierre. *The Next Adult Education and Training Survey.* Memorandum sent in preparation of an upcoming survey. Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, 1997.

Wannell, Ted and Nathalie Caron. *The Gender Earnings Gap Among Recent PostSecondary Graduates 1984-92.* Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1994.

Willms, J. Douglas. *International Adult Literacy Survey, Literacy Skills of Canadian Youth.* Ottawa: Minister of Industry, 1997.

Survey shows Link between High School Graduation and Economic and Social Prosperity, Canadian Vocational Journal Vol. 29, No. 1. Fall 1993.

Appendix A
Project Descriptions

There were a total of 72 projects funded through the Learning Initiatives program. They have been sub-divided into three program areas: National Learning Goals, Measurement Tools and Information Dissemination.

National Learning Goals

There are 32 projects that are classified under the National Learning Goals area.

Project	Description
1. Integrated Services CASA	A preliminary survey and study to determine if services to children and families are integrated well with the program services provided by school districts. The survey results would lead to an assessment of the role being played by several community-based agencies in supporting learning in co-operation with school authorities.
2. Partnerships in Schools Canadian Home & School Parent-Teacher Federation	A joint conference was held with the Canadian Association of Principals on parent involvement in Canadian schools. The two organizations examined the development of parent involvement in Canadian schools with the view of isolating those characteristics which will promote effective partnership in schools.
3. Mentoring Project Neil Squire Foundation	A pilot mentoring program was launched in high schools and elementary schools to encourage students with disabilities to stay in school.
4. First Nations University Education Project Saskatchewan Indian Federated College	The study will focus on First Nations education. The objective will be to create a set of national goals, educational measurements and accountability mechanisms along with a plan for consensus building and implementation. The goals will be relevant for primary and secondary education programs since these are the programs that prepare students for university.
5. Increasing Access to Science Education for Young Women Youth Engineering and Science Camps	The project involves a partnership between Women Inventors Project (WIP) and Youth Engineering and Science (YES) Camps to improve and increase 13- to 18-year-old girls' participation at YES camps.
6. Let's Get Moving Canadian University Exchange Consortium	CUSEC organized and hosted a national conference dedicated to increasing mobility of university and college students within Canada.

Project	Description
7. Marketing Mobility Project Canadian University Exchange Consortium	A review of CUSEC's information and dissemination practices with target audiences across the country to determine measures to enhance the promotion and communications of the Consortium's student mobility program on campuses. The results of this review would lead to the development of a national marketing plan for the Consortium to promote its activities in support of mobility of university students within Canada.
8. Women in Engineering: If You Can Find a Better Way Streetwise Production	The film focused on the variety of jobs already being performed by women in the field of engineering and the positive experiences the women involved take with them. The film featured strong female role models in engineering sharing their real-life stories about how they became engineers.
9. Default Study, Phase Centre for Policy and Program Assessment Carleton University	The purpose of Phase 1 was to study the reasons for default by borrowers of Canada Student Loans and the potential consequences for borrowers, governments, lenders and educational institutions.
10. World Leadership Victoria University	Several goals are listed for the Conference, such as promoting peace through international dialogue and reflection on serious world problems; to offer students an inspiring educational experience which allows them to reflect on problems of a global nature, to share reflections with world leaders and to complement the theoretical knowledge obtained in their readings.
11. One-Start Prior Wilfrid Laurier University	This project is a study to determine the feasibility of developing a community Learning Assessment information and student support system to help adult learners access career information and to provide them with support for prior learning assessment, while minimizing resources and avoiding duplication.
12. "How to" Resource Industry-Education Council Hamilton-Wentworth	The purpose of the project was to develop a "How to" resource manual for establishing IEC and for developing partnerships in education and training.
13. Ukraine Initiative-Reform Through Knowledge AUCC	The programs aim is to support economic and democratic reform in the Ukraine through assistance to the country's system of higher education. The program will focus on five key sectors important to reform of the higher education system of Ukraine: university administration; higher education policy; law curricula, business and management curricula, environmental curricula.
14. Office of Partnerships in Advanced Skills Council of Ontario Universities	The objective of the project is to establish an Office of Partnerships in Advanced Skills to support a continuing, effective partnership between Ontario universities and the participating sectors.

Project	Description
15. Second Global Conference on Lifelong Learning CALL	The conference will address four main themes: economic development and the learner; investing for success; societal benefits of investing in learning and CALL investing in cultural diversity.
16. Symposium on Student Performance Standards Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation	The two-day symposium covered various topics such as the relationship of standards to graduation requirements, outcomes and the common curriculum.
17. National Youth Skills Comité Montréalais des Olympiades de la Formation	A three-day National Youth Skills Competition was held in Montreal May 3-5, 1996 as a means of promoting the recognition and value of trade and technical occupational training for youth. The conference brought together employers, educators, youth, government and other learning partners in a co-ordinated effort to change the attitudes and career paths of Canada's youth and prepare them for the world of work.
18. Impact Assessment of Information Highway Ekos Research Associates	An examination of the information highway in the workplace and in particular the meaning and implications of the technology for lifelong learning.
19. Saving for Post-Secondary Education, Phase I Acumen Research	A mail-out survey of applicants to Ontario universities developed by Acumen Research. Acumen is co-ordinating a multi-client study of factors that influence university selection. The study involves a survey of 5 000 randomly selected applicants to university.
20. Individual Returns from Investment in Lifelong Learning National Partners Education Awards Conference Board of Canada	The Conference Board's Partners in Education Awards program was launched in 1990 as the National Business and Education Centre's major initiative to raise awareness about innovation and change in education by recognizing and awarding excellence. There are three awards categories: elementary and secondary, post-secondary and broad community collaboration.
21. Student Loan Debt Levels, Phase 1 Consulting & Audit Canada Corporate Research Group	Phase 1 is one of independent studies which is intended to provide information on current combined student debt and the capacity of student borrowers to handle debt on an ongoing basis.
22. Enhancing Participation in Advanced Learning Gallagher & Associates	Phase 1 of an independent study to provide an in-depth analysis of access, participation and barriers to advanced learning in Canada, particularly in consideration of the changing economic and social circumstances of the last decade.
23. Consumer's Guide to Training FutureEd Associates	The project is a market research study concerned with the development and dissemination of a consumer's guide to training.

Project	Description
24. Handbook, PSE & Students with Learning Disabilities The Meighen Centre	The development of a transition handbook for parents and their children who have learning disabilities. The handbook examines the factors that assist students with learning disabilities make a successful transition from high school to post-secondary education.
25. International Youth Skills Competition Skills Canada	Ensuring national representation at the upcoming International Skills Competition, being held in Montreal, 1999.
26. National Standards for Accommodation NEADS	The projects aim is to develop an action plan in order to lessen the tremendous difficulties that youth with disabilities face in accessing post-secondary education and making school to work transitions.
27. The Value of a Masters Degree in Canada Ross Finnie	An empirical study of the early career outcomes of Master's graduates based on the three waves of National Graduates Survey databases.
28. National Partnerships Centre, feasibility study IEC, Hamilton-Wentworth	IEC aims to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of a National Partnership Centre in Hamilton.
29. La Dictée P.G.L. La Fondation Paul Gerin-Lajoie	The project enhances academic programs at primary schools and encourages children to expand their energies on their education. The underlying objective of the 1997/98 edition is to invite teachers, parents and students to explore the science universe and the possible careers offered through new technologies: biotechnology, computer science and environmental engineering.
30. Inquiries, Workshop Learning for a Sustainable Future	The contract will allow LSF to achieve its 1997/98 mandate through two methods: inquiries on critical issues and by conducting workshops and making institutes available for students to attend in the summer.
31. Internationalization of Learning AUCC	This study is to identify and consult with key players, identify areas of consensus, and recommend roles and responsibilities for a strategic framework for internationalization of learning within a global knowledge-based economy. This framework is to be the structure around which governments and institutions can begin structuring their relationships to provide a more orderly and effective Canadian presence in the global marketplace.
32. Miramichi New Brunswick Community College	The project is developing a Learning Centre, which will focus on developing advanced technology training programs for Canadians that are technology based and capable of distance delivery on Canada's information highway.

Measurement Tools

There are a total of 28 projects that classified under the Measurement Tools area.

Project	Description
1. Federal Representation on Board of Directors Canadian Education Association	HRDC was invited to sponsor and sit on CEA's Board of Directors where CEA provided an opportunity to formalize and solidify relationships with key policy makers and senior provincial officials who also sit on the Board. The symbolic invitation will send a strong signal to the public that all levels of government are willing and able to work together effectively to improve the education system in Canada.
2. Recognition of Best Partnerships Canadian Conference Board of Canada	This project is a partnership between HRDC, the Royal Bank, Canada Post Corp. and the Conference Board. The Broad Community Collaboration Awards (BCCA) were presented by HRDC. BCCA recognizes the best Canadian partnerships involving numerous stakeholders including collaboration with 50 or more partners and partnerships spanning three or more provinces or territories. The awards are presented at the Conference Board's "Reaching for Success: Business and Education Walking Together" conference.
3. National Conference Canada's National Skills Competition Skills Canada	Skills Canada is organizing a national skills competition to promote the recognition and value of trade and technical occupation training for youth. The competition will bring employers, educators, youth, government and other learning partners together in a co-ordinated effort to change the attitudes and career paths of Canada's youth and prepare them for the world of work.
4. Comprehensive Assessment Recognition and Awards Programs Skills Canada	A broad independent research study which will assess the extent to which recognition and award programs for apprentices, technicians and technologists and their employers exist across Canada, culminating in the production of a comprehensive inventory of programs.
5. Promote more and better partnerships Canadian Partnership Network (Business-Education and Partnership Forum)	The Conference Board's National Business and Education Centre has established a Business-Education and Partnership Forum, the goal of which is to promote more and better partnerships by providing and generating expert advice, information and guidance about business-education partnerships. The forum participants will prepare and submit six reports to both HRDC and the Conference Board following each of the six meetings. The reports will detail key feedback from CPN's constituencies related to each of the Forum's meetings, focusing on specific Forum-related tasks. The report will clearly outline how the CPN is utilizing information and experiences from its participation in the Forum and bringing key feedback from relevant CPN constituencies to the Forum.

Project	Description
6. Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program CMEC	To create a full range of indicators to describe education and learning in Canada in all areas, from pre-school through lifelong learning.
7. Career Transitions Stories Project Canadian Guiding & Counselling Foundation	The project involves researching and developing a series of stories profiling approximately 30 people who have made successful transitions to self-sufficiency. By reading about the positive transition experiences of other individuals, clients will be able to relate to real situations and identify with particular circumstances and variables in a non-intimidating manner.
8. Role of Learning Price Waterhouse	The project involves drafting a paper on the role of learning professions and learning organizations, in view of accelerating the development of learning applications on the information highway.
9. Canadian Forum on Learning AUCC	To undertake a feasibility study and developmental work on the possible creation of a Canadian Forum on Learning. The project would enable the Consortium of organizations to consult widely with representatives of business, labour, provincial governments and education and other groups with regard to the possible mandate, objectives and structure of a Canadian Forum on Learning. The results of these consultations would be included in a report on the feasibility and possible designs of a Canadian Learning Forum. A copy of the report will be provided to Employment and Immigration Canada.
10. Canadian School Board	No Description Available.
11. Sussex Circle	To prepare a paper with Strategic Policy on the development of a broad federal youth strategy involving a number of other departments including Justice, Canadian Heritage, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Health Canada.
12. Contingent Work Study: Impacts on Workers and Organizations Conference Board of Canada	The purpose of this study is to provide information which will allow HRDC to identify policy and programming issues that need to be addressed by the government, the private sector and other stakeholders. The study is comprised of an advisory board formation, a literature review to define contingent work arrangements, a survey of employers, in-depth interviews with contingent workers, focus groups of contingent workers, interviews and focus groups of managers, interviews and focus groups of union representatives and five case studies of selected firms.
13. Canadian School Board Association	Sponsorship of keynote speaker, Professor David Foote. His present research interests are in the interrelationships between economics and demographics and in the implications for both private and public policy, especially in the Canadian context.

Project	Description
14. Lifelong Learning Conference Board of Canada	No Description Available.
15. Canadian Education Association	No Description Available.
16. Conference on Youth	130 delegates attended the National Conference for Youth held in Ottawa September 18-20, 1996. Individuals and groups representing youth at-large, business, labour, government and youth-serving organizations tackled the tough issue of easing the transition from school to work for young people.
17. School Leavers Survey	Computer assisted telephone interviews obtained demographic/background data and information on school experiences and post-school labour market experiences from 9,460 young people aged 18 to 20. In early 1994, HRDC requested that Statistics Canada re-interview the 1991 survey respondents. The principal objective of the follow-up was to gather information on school-work transitions.
18. National Graduates Survey	The purpose of these surveys has been to provide information relating to the integration of recent graduates into the labour market, in terms of the match between education, training and occupation.
19. National Job Skills Survey	This survey will assess the problem solving, oral communication, social, information technology and learning skills in the workforce which employers are seeking.
20. Outcomes Based Education CVA	No Description Available.
21. School Achievement Indicators Program	To provide a Canadian information base to assist ministries of education assess the performance of the education systems in relation to the agreed-upon criteria.
22. Adult Education and Training Survey	Statistics Canada is to prepare a French- and English-ready version of the 1994 Adult Education and Training Survey Report. Statistics Canada will: • Prepare a mock up of the report for review by HRDC; and • Prepare a ready-to-print document in each official language.
23. International Adult Literacy Survey	Research papers to be prepared on the economic impact of literacy, literacy and youth transition, literacy and poverty, literacy and the unemployed and the impact of literacy practices at home and in the workplace.

Project	Description
24. Exemplary Schools Project CEA	The Exemplary Schools Project is funded by Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) and is being conducted by the Canadian Education Association (CEA). About 20 high schools across Canada have been selected for intensive case analyses. The studies will define what makes a good school good and suggest practices for use elsewhere. The purpose of this contract is primarily to obtain advice assistance and recommendations on the conduct of the Exemplary Schools Project. It is also to obtain advice and support, as required, on other research on education-related issues that impact upon the labour market undertaken by Innovations Program.
25. Workshop CEA	No Description Available.
26. Workshop CVA	No Description Available.
27. An Inventory of Education Research Units CEA	Develop an initial inventory of research units involved in a substantial way with the field of education, the areas of expertise possessed, and the major research theme being pursued. The work would be a quick and simple survey at first upon which a more comprehensive and detailed inquiry would be built if requested.

Information Dissemination

There are 13 projects that are classified under the Information Dissemination area.

Project	Description
1. Reprints of Various Brochures	Reprints of various career information brochures and other material distributed through Occupational & Career Development.
2. Database Management of Post-Secondary Programs — Occupations DAG	This was the first contract awarded to DAG in what was to become the Learning Navigator (see #3). It was to develop the algorithmic engine (the kernel) in which the computation for the prerequisite tree structure is stored.
3. The Learning Navigator DAG	The Learning Navigator provides an innovative way of helping citizens plan an appropriate learning plan leading to a specified certification. It is intended to serve as a nationwide link of secondary and post-secondary institutions, according to which anyone at an electronic terminal can browse subjects, course descriptions and degree regulations in order to assess education outcomes and make career decisions.
4. CD-ROM — Education Learning Platform Eduplus Tecsult	The project is designed to develop stand-alone software that can be used in schools, post-secondary institutions and employment centres. It will allow Canadians to explore specific training options which they need in order to qualify for their chosen career paths.
5. The Resume Machine	The aim of the project is to develop a touch screen tool which uses templates to produce resumes.
6. Take Our Kids to Work	The project consists of organizing one day where grade 9 students will have a chance to go with their parent, friend, relative or volunteer host to the workplace.
7. Native Video	The video is a self-esteem film showing the roles and contributions of native people.
8. Career Considerations REPRINT	A wall chart which describes 19 occupational groups and provides examples of various occupations within each, accompanied by 19 brochures for each group.
9. Career Information on the Web	A web page which contains interactive descriptions of all Career Information products offered.
10. Minding Your Own Business	A booklet which helps people to assess whether entrepreneurship or starting a small business is a realistic career option.
11. Self-Help Kit to Get Employment Related Experience	No Description Available.
12. National Guide to College & University Programs	This publication provides a comprehensive list of 10 000 programs offered by universities and community colleges in Canada.

Project	Description
13. Canadian Career Information Partnership	The CCIP is a national network of government and private sector agencies who work together to provide career and labour market information to Canadians.